



# THE INDEPENDENT

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WEATHER: Breezy and muggy with showers

(IR 45p) 40p

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**LIZ HURLEY, OAP?**



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**STRANGE DELIGHTS ON DAVID LYNCH'S LOST HIGHWAY**



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**WHEN SEXUAL HARASSMENT IS NOT SEXUAL HARASSMENT**

INSIDE THE TABLOID

**EDUCATION+ WILL STUDENTS GET WHAT THEY PAY FOR?**

## Fewer enter GCSE English

Judith Judd  
Education Editor

A decline in GCSE examination entries for English and several other major subjects is revealed in results for nearly 600,000 candidates published today. By contrast, there were big increases in the numbers entering subjects such as home economics, physical education and information technology.

Thirteen thousand fewer pupils took English than last year, a 2 per cent decline, compared with a fall in the number of 16-year-olds of 1.3 per cent. The proportion of top grades in English was also slightly lower.

One expert suggested that boys, who traditionally do less well than girls in English, were voting with their feet against a subject that they disliked.

English teachers said schools might be entering fewer pupils because the last government's decision to cut coursework had made it more difficult for teachers to interest the less able pupils. Numbers also dropped in history, geography, humanities, economics and French but increased in Spanish.

The GCSE examination boards said provisional figures showed that the proportion of entries getting grades A\* to C—the equivalent of the old O-level—was up by 0.4 per cent to 54.4 per cent. Last year's provisional figure was 53.7 per cent.

Alan Smithers, professor of public policy at Brunel University, said: "It could be that we are seeing a shift away from the classical curriculum to encompass a broader range of subjects." Exam league tables are based on the proportion of pupils getting five A\* to C grades. But they can be in any subject and need not include English, he pointed out.

Anne Barnes, general secretary of the National Association for the Teaching of English, said less coursework in syllabuses left a lot of children disenfranchised. But Dr Kim Howells, the education and employment minister, said he was concerned at the dip in performance in English but believed that government measures on literacy and national targets for 11-year-olds would, in time, take effect.

Results, page 8



Last chance: Mark Ramprakash, the Middlesex captain recalled to the England side, practising in the nets at The Oval, where the final Test against Australia starts today. England are 3-1 down in the Ashes series. Photograph: David Ashdown

## Underworld paid to shop the IRA

Jason Bennetto  
Crime Correspondent

Criminals are helping police with important tip-offs against IRA members in Britain for large cash rewards, the head of Scotland Yard's Anti-Terrorist Branch has revealed.

Commander John Grieve, the national anti-terrorist co-ordinator, said that leads provided by underworld informers had been of "enormous benefit" in counter terrorism. The criminals have been motivated by a mixture of money, revenge, and self interest.

It was also revealed that members of the underworld are also far more willing to talk to anti-terrorist squad officers than detectives dealing in mainstream crime because they are confident they will not be arrested.

A reward of up to £1m was offered in February last year following the Docklands bomb in east London which killed two people and ended the IRA ceasefire, but until now it was unclear how useful such financial incentives are in attracting informers.

Mr Grieve told *The Independent*: "Information from various areas of the community, including the criminal community, has been of enormous benefit to those engaged in the counter-terrorist offensive."

"Organised crime can be seen as a web work of loose alliances and old hatreds. We can, and do, make use of this."

He went on: "We know that some criminals are motivated by money, and will pass on useful information about other criminals in return for rewards. We have encouraged officers to explore the potential with their in-



formants in all criminal fields."

The Anti-Terrorist Branch has targeted individuals on the criminal fringes, such as shady car dealers as well as more senior villains who are likely to have contact with IRA members looking for equipment such as false identification papers, stolen vehicles and firearms.

The increased use of criminal informers is understood to be one of the new techniques deployed by Mr Grieve, who oversees anti-terrorist investigations across the country, that has helped lead to a string of successes against the IRA. Other developments have been the growth of surveillance cameras, the police anti-terrorist hotline - 0800 789 321 - and closer co-operation with MI5.

Mr Grieve is unwilling to discuss individual cases and cash rewards, but it is understood that information from criminals has been fundamental in providing vital break-throughs.

Underworld figures have made it clear that they are less

wary of anti-terrorist officers, who are considered less of a threat to their liberty than other police departments.

Mr Grieve said: "Criminals seem more keen to talk to the Anti-Terrorist Branch because they see us in a different light or put us in a different category, or think we have different priorities from other police officers. Perhaps this could be another example of communities defeating terrorism."

He added: "Communities defeat crime, and in saying this I include the criminal community. Criminals are vulnerable to the risk of being informed on by their own kind."

"Some of our appeals have been targeted at specific areas of the community - for example, the 'dodgy' end of the motor vehicle trade, people who may have... information about suspicious deals and activities which are of interest to the Anti-Terrorist Branch."

But Dr Clive Norris, of Hull University, who recently completed a two year study on the use of police informers, warned last night of the potential dangers of using paid "grasses".

He said: "There's a real danger if the police are becoming involved with active criminals that one of the unintentional consequences is that they may have to turn a blind eye to the criminal acts of their informers to keep them out of prison."

He said that informers provided information for a variety of reasons. "Money is the best and clearest motive. It could also be to settle old scores, in which they case may be less interested in telling the truth, or clearing the field for arms and drug dealing."

### QUICKLY

#### High Street sales surge

Fears of another mortgage rise - the fifth in as many months - were sparked by official figures showing retail sales growing at their fastest rates since the consumer boom of the late 1980s. High street sales growth hit 6.5 per cent last month, much faster than expected. Page 16

#### Refugee influx

Thousands of Colombian refugees who have fled to Britain seeking asylum have been refused entry. The influx follows fierce fighting within the country. Page 8

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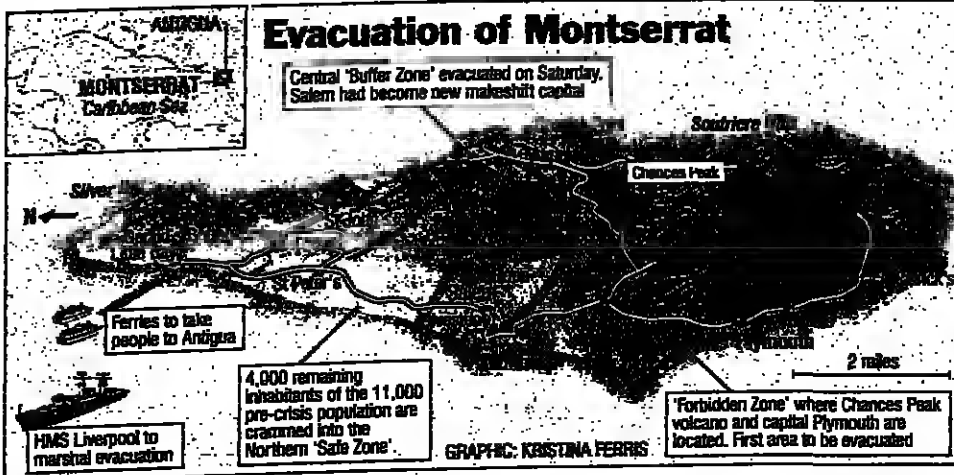
## 'Let the wicked be no more', plead the Concerned People of Montserrat

Phil Davison  
reports from  
Oveston as the  
Ishlanders face  
up to 'voluntary  
evacuation'

It could have been a Fifties English film, with Alec Guinness as the colonial governor, but the crowd in front of him was deadly serious. Above them, black smoke and ash billowed from the Soufriere Hills volcano. A few hundred yards offshore, the frigate HMS Liverpool lay at anchor, ready to help evacuate the remaining 4,000 inhabitants of Montserrat.

The volcano has gradually squeezed these people into a small area in the north of this British Caribbean island. The protesters were angered by what they consider the British government's vacillation and lack of clarity over whether to evacuate the island and, if so, how much assistance they should receive.

Angry and frustrated over their emergency living conditions and confused about a "voluntary evacuation" offer, they banged bongo drums, marched to the British Governor's office and demanded his resignation. They blamed the Queen for "trampling her sub-



jects" and threatened to declare independence if their demands are not met.

There were only 150 of them this time, but they were very upset and they'd never done anything like this before. They promised to do it again every day until their plight is improved and their number is likely to grow. Most Montserratians later expressed sympathy with their actions.

Flanked by his local police chief from Sussex in khaki colonial uniform, Governor Frank Savage came out into the driveway, pushed his police officers aside and walked into the crowd armed only with a stiff upper lip. As a dreadlocked rastafarian protester shouted out "let me kill the boy," Mr Savage, the only man on the island in a striped Harrods shirt and dark blue tie, declared: "Thank you for coming to see me today."

The governor, who is due to leave the post next month, tried to placate the demonstrators, but with little success. He was relatively popular until the volcano turned serious last month, killing around 20 people. "Mr Savage, we're not only dissatisfied with Mr Osborne [Bertrand Osborne, the island's local government Chief Minister], we're dissatisfied with you," said one. "You are not representing us any more. We, the people are representing ourselves."

"Resign," came a shout from the crowd.

They carried placards saying: "We are not animals. We are human beings" and "No more lies." "We used to salute the Queen," shouted Julian Romeo, a local businessman behind a new group called The Concerned People of Montserrat. "Let her respect us. Let her understand that either we are British citizens or she can let us go."

Diplomatic as ever, the governor thanked Mr Romeo, shook his hand and referred to him as "the moderator". Apparently forgetting that the natives speak the same tongue, he used that particular brand of special, slow-motion and extra-clear English which diplomats generally use in front of foreigners. The group presented an

11-point proposal to the Governor, rejecting the voluntary evacuation package proposed by Britain at the weekend, demanded restitution for their lost homes and businesses, insisted Montserratians maintain their nationality after any evacuation and called for assurances that Britain will develop the previously little-inhabited north of the island, considered the only safe zone left.

"In the event of a total evacuation, we want to make it clear that we are not abandoning our country but expect to return here when it is safe to do so," said group spokeswoman Teresa Silcott as the governor listened. If Britain did not respond, she said, Montserrat, one of a dozen British Dependent Territories, would demand independence.

The Governor laid out the package on offer. First, those wishing to evacuate to Britain would be put up in hotels in nearby Antigua, fed three meals a day and transported to Britain within about a week at Britain's expense. Second, he supported a package put forward by Chief Minister Osborne the night before, under which a family of four would receive £27,500 over a period of 18 months as evacuation compensation. Britain was considering the proposal, he said. Third, Britain would support anyone who remains on the island.

Leading article, page 13

**"A SUPERB VISION WHICH REMAINS IMPRINTED ON YOU FOR DAYS AFTER YOU SEE IT"**  
SUNDANCE • GEOFFREY GILMORE

**"STUNNING...HILARIOUS...HYPNOTIC AND SIZZLINGLY EROTIC...LYNCH'S ZONKED, VISIONARY MAGIC MAKES IT FLY"**  
ROLLING STONE • PETER TRAVERS

**"HAS ALL THE ACES...DARK, SEXY AND MYSTERIOUS...A TRIUMPHANT RETURN TO FORM FOR LYNCH"**  
VOX • TOMMY UDO

**LOST HIGHWAY**  
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22.8.97

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## news

## significant shorts

## Coroner links CJD death to eating infected meat

The Government came under renewed pressure to open a public inquiry into the risks posed to humans by "mad cow" disease, after a coroner linked a 19-year-old trainee chef's death to having eaten BSE-infected food.

Recording a verdict of misadventure on Matthew Parker, of Doncaster, who died of the new variant of the incurable brain disorder Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (CJD) in March, deputy coroner Fred Curtis said that on the balance of probabilities the medical evidence showed a link between the teenager's infection with CJD and the consumption of BSE-infected food. He was said to have had an appetite for burgers pies and sausages.

The solicitor to the Parker family, David Brody, said after the verdict: "The link with BSE has been accepted by the coroner and we are pleased with that. We have suggested to the Government that a public inquiry is what is needed now."

Yesterday was the second time that a UK coroner has blamed a CJD death on BSE. Last October, a Belfast coroner linked the two diseases in the death of Maurice Callaghan, 30, whose wife told the inquest that he had eaten red meat two or three times a week. There have been 21 recorded cases of new variant CJD in the UK since it was first identified in 1995.

Charles Arthur

## Fire alert shuts Channel Tunnel

The Channel Tunnel was closed for more than an hour yesterday after two separate fire alarms went off within minutes of each other on board freight trains travelling in opposite directions.

Up to 60 passengers had to be evacuated to the service tunnel while the cause of the alarms was investigated and the trains cleared to proceed. Two Eurostar passenger trains, carrying about 200 people, were also held up. An investigation will be launched into why the two alarms were wrongly activated, but a spokesman for Eurotunnel said that it appeared to be "pure coincidence" that they should have gone off so close together. Under new safety procedures introduced following last November's fire within the tunnel, the trains stopped immediately the alarms were sounded.

## Supreme victory for Motown fans



Two British Motown fans have won a 10-year battle to persuade record giant Polygram to open their vaults and release an album of rare tracks.

Chris King and Jim Stewart refused to take no for an answer from the owners of the Motown catalogue and are now celebrating the release of *This Is Northern Soul*. It features 24 rarely-heard tracks from legendary singers from the mid-60s like Marvin Gaye, Gladys Knight (left), Frank Wilson and even Motown's backing group the Andantes. Mr Stewart, 50, a CD supplier from Swanley, Kent, and Mr King, a DJ from Nottingham, hope to sell 12,000 copies of the compilation to ensure a second album is commissioned.

## Body of British diver recovered

Rescuers yesterday recovered the body of British diver Rob Parker, 35, who died after getting into difficulties during exploration of the Blue Holes undersea cavern complex in the Bahamas. A fellow diver had tried to help him to the surface after problems developed while the pair were diving at a depth of 260ft, but he himself got into difficulties and the two men became separated.

## Killer on run after jail escape

Police are hunting the brutal killer of a mother-of-three after he escaped from a low-security jail with another inmate.

Police said Darren Jackson, who murdered, sexually assaulted and robbed 29-year-old Gillian Ellis as she walked home from a party in December 1984, was dangerous and violent and warned the public not to approach him. He was serving a life sentence. Jackson, 32, formerly of Burnley, Lancashire, and 22-year-old Neil Skinner - who was serving a three-year term for drugs offences - escaped from Ranby Prison, Nottinghamshire on Tuesday evening.

## Monster wasps' nest found in attic

The current heatwave has led to what experts believe could be the biggest wasps' nest in the country being found in the attic of a family home.

The nest, which measured 4ft 8ins by 4ft 6ins, was found in the loft of a house in Lawley Gate, Horsehay, near Telford, Shropshire. A spokesman for the Guinness Book of Records said there was no entry for the largest wasps' nest in the current edition and added: "We would need to do some research before we could confirm whether or not it is the biggest one."

## Women infringed by bizarre painter

Police are seeking a man who has covered women in paint on the pretence that they will appear as painted statues in a performance at the Edinburgh Fringe.

Officers investigating the bizarre incidents say the man, who calls himself Steven, is known to have painted at least two women - fully clothed - in the past 10 days in the Leith area of Edinburgh.

A police spokesman said "No physical harm has been done to any of this man's victims, but clearly we want to find out who he is ... We realise people may be embarrassed to come forward but we need to find out how many people he has come into contact with."

## DAILY POEM

## The Sign

By José Angel Valente  
(translated by Arthur Terry)

Scanning this tiny man-made object,  
this simple bowl of clay baked in the sun,  
in which the permanence of coarse material  
becomes a sign or token,  
whose kneaded presence turns to brittle form,  
image of time or the escape from time,  
one's gaze unfolds,  
slowly takes in the delicate invention,  
all that the hand instilled into the lump  
of clumsy, living earth.

Here, in this object  
which the shifting eye explores,  
seeking the axis of proportion,  
our being settles for a moment:  
through it some other life extends its truth,  
another eye, another dream achieve  
their simplest answer.

Today and tomorrow, the Daily Poem comes from Agenda magazine's special issue on new Spanish verse, edited by Jordi Doce with translations by a galaxy of British and Irish poets including Paul Muldoon, Andrew Motion and Michael Hofmann. The Agenda Anthology of Spanish Poetry costs £4.90; annual subscriptions are £20 from 5 Cranbourne Court, Albert Bridge Road, London SW11 4PE.

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## people



Glorious! Dustin Hoffman (right) smoozes mud over the pop singer Sting as they take a therapeutic mud bath in a lagoon in Dalyan, on the Mediterranean coast of Turkey. The actor and singer are sharing a luxury yacht with their families on a cruising holiday which also took them to visit a sea turtle nesting home, in line with Sting's well-known concern for wildlife. (Photograph: Reuters)

## Elle McPherson prepares for model motherhood

The latest development in the life of Elle McPherson (right), the Australian model, may pose a threat to the perfectly proportioned figure that has earned her the nickname The Body. McPherson, 34, is pregnant with her first child, it emerged yesterday.

Her brother, Brendan Gow, said that the baby was due in February. The father is Arpad "Archie" Bussan, the 35-year-old Swiss financier who has been at McPherson's side since she split up with Kevin Costner, the Hollywood star, last year.

Mr Gow said that the model had told her family about the pregnancy a month ago. "She's very, very happy, and it will be a very welcome addition to the family," he said. According to reports in Australian women's magazines, McPherson has been wearing an engagement ring since March, but has told friends that she does not plan to get married until after the baby is born.

Her father, Peter Gow, said yesterday that she had been "in love for some time now". He added: "I don't know about marriage. This is the 20th century."

In recent years, McPherson has branched out from

her lucrative modelling career into other interests, including acting. Coincidentally, her latest role is as an expectant mother, complete with padding, in the American film *Mom's Up On The Roof*.

McPherson, whose previous credits include *Batman* and *Robin* and *Sirens*, also has her own women's underwear label, Elle McPherson Intimates, and a share with fellow models in the Fashion Café, a chain of theme restaurants.

Her relationship with Mr Bussan follows a string of romances with wealthy and high-profile men including Yann Gambin, the French photographer, Tim Jefferies, the British multi-millionaire art dealer, and Sean Penn and the rock star Michael Hutchence.

She married a French photographer, Gilles Bensimon, in 1986, but they separated six years later when she found out that he was having an affair with another model.

McPherson can still charge tens of thousands of pounds a day as a model, but there are those happy to report any less-than-perfect physical attributes. One newspaper gleefully reported signs of cellulite when she was photographed on holiday in St Tropez last month.



## BBC erased classic Cook and Moore archives in favour of local news

Almost all of the classic *Not Only ... But Also* series by Peter Cook and Dudley Moore has been wiped by the BBC to make space in its archives for local news programmes it was revealed yesterday.

Out of 21 episodes of the cult *Not Only ... But Also* comedy series 16 were wiped by the BBC between 1970 and 1974. The five that remain were filmed illegally from a TV screen at the time of broadcast by the series producer who was scared of the tapes being lost.

The story emerges from a biography of Peter Cook (right) published today by comedy producer Harry Thompson.

Mr Thompson describes the wiping of the tapes as an act of cultural vandalism and has tried to find out who in the BBC's senior management ordered the wiping.

"People didn't question it. Comedy wasn't seen as a cultural artefact to be saved."

"Instead the main priority was to keep news programmes. Every single dumb local news item had to be kept."

Mr Thompson met Peter Cook after working in the BBC's archives in the Eighties. He discovered the few remaining episodes and copied them onto a



VHS tape. This he presented to Mr Cook and saved a copy for himself.

The BBC has subsequently used the few tapes left in compilation to show a *Best of Not Only ... But Also*. "That's why the so-called classic scenes from the series are the only ones you ever see," said Mr Thompson, "it's the only ones they've got."

*Not Only ... But Also* grew out of Cook and Moore's collaboration in the hit satire *Beyond The Fringe*. The BBC's policy on keeping tapes also meant that the black and white episodes of *Steptoe and Son* shown by the BBC two years ago were from tapes made illegally by a fan in Australia. The originals had been destroyed.

A BBC Resources spokesman said "If anyone has any tapes from that time we would love to hear from them and take them back into the archive."

Paul McCann

## Mother arrested after admitting crime on TV

The mother of a former murder suspect was arrested yesterday after telling a television programme she ordered the disposal of a knife.

Diana Ash-Smith's husband Aubrey is currently serving a 12-month sentence after being found guilty earlier this year of perverting the course of justice.

Their son Colin has been questioned in the past about the unsolved murder of Claire Titman, the teenager who was stabbed to death in January 1993 in an alley at Greenhithe, Kent. He is currently serving a life sentence for attacks on two other women.

A Kent police spokeswoman said yesterday that Mrs Ash-Smith was being questioned at Gravesend police station. "We can confirm that a woman has been arrested on suspicion of perverting the course of justice following comments made in a television programme last night," she said.

Mrs Ash-Smith - who has always believed in her son's innocence - told *Meridian Focus* last night that she ordered a knife to be disposed of when police were questioning her son.

Mrs Ash-Smith, a former mayor of Swanscombe and Greenhithe, says she felt the family were being harassed by police.

"I expect I'll get arrested and put away now, but I said for Christ's sake get rid of that bloody knife, you know what police are like, they'll come and put us away."

## briefing

## CHILDREN

## Heartbeat may prove key to cot-death syndrome

Babies at risk of cot death may be identified in future by studying heartbeat, it emerged yesterday.

A United States mathematician has developed a way of measuring randomness that appears to offer a way to spot infants in danger. The system has already been used to pick out babies that have survived non-fatal episodes of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

The method raises the possibility of screening infants for a tendency to experience periods of unusually regular heartbeat. Such infants could be fitted with monitors to detect episodes of extreme regularity and alert doctors or parents. Normally a heartbeat that seems on the surface to be regular actually beats in a complex irregular rhythm as it responds to incoming signals from the brain, muscles and digestive system. While the causes of cot-death are unknown, some doctors believe babies threatened by cot-death exhibit a strange tendency for their heartbeats to descend into a sinister pattern of regularity.

A report in *New Scientist* magazine said: "The technique doesn't yet offer foolproof detection, but through further refinement could become a powerful medical tool to help save infants from SIDS."

## HEALTH

## Asthma patients suffer needlessly

Thousands of asthma sufferers are condemning themselves to a life of misery by failing to treat their condition properly, it was claimed yesterday.

As the number of people with asthma soars, *The Which? Guide to Managing Asthma* said many of the debilitating symptoms could be kept under control by using the most conventional treatments and self-help strategies, and that even deaths can be prevented by taking control of the condition.

The book, written by Mark Greenier, an asthma sufferer himself, examines how balancing self-help and correctly used medication can help people with asthma reclaim their quality of life - and, in some cases, even save it. Studies suggest that eight out of ten asthma deaths may be preventable. Mr Greenier said asthma sufferers could reduce the risk of an attack by reducing the level of dust mites, a trigger factor, by washing bed linen at least once a week at above 60C, and pillows and blankets monthly, and placing soft toys in the freezer for six hours a week to kill the mites.

People who are allergic to pollen should keep windows closed on hot sunny days, especially in the morning and late afternoon, and, to avoid pollution, asthma sufferers should not jog in polluted areas or exercise with the window open in the city.

## BOTANY

## Plants that look into the future



Plants have an uncanny power to predict thunderstorms by detecting electricity in the air, a British expert claims.

Andrew Goldsworthy, a botanist, believes plants developed their weather forecasting ability to gear up their metabolism for an expected downpour. It could explain what every gardener knows - that plants look particularly healthy after heavy weather.

According to Goldsworthy this is an effect that cannot simply be achieved with a sprinkler. The theory is that if plants are watered unexpectedly they cannot react quickly enough to gain the maximum benefit. But if they could tell in advance when it was likely to rain, they could prepare for growth by switching on the necessary biochemical machinery.

Goldsworthy has carried out experiments at Imperial College, London, which show that plant cells react to electric current. In thunder weather, even before the storm breaks, very high voltage gradients build up. Goldsworthy believes plants have evolved a way of exploiting these conditions. He told *New Scientist* magazine: "Plants are very clever at sensing the environment and if there's any signal they could possibly use, my guess is they'll use it."

## MEDICINE

## Crackdown on dangerous doctors

Alan Milburn, the health minister, yesterday launched a crackdown on temporary doctors who put patients at risk.

A new code of practice covering the employment of locum doctors in hospitals has been published to weed out those who are a danger to patients. The move follows long-term concerns about the quality of care provided by some locums. Within the past two years, there have been a number of incidents involving locum doctors, including a serious sexual assault by an orthopaedic surgeon on a child patient. Mr Milburn said: "The existing rules governing the employment of locum doctors are inadequate. In future all locum doctors will be screened." Locum agencies should assess and provide a statement of any criminal convictions and a criminal records clearance form. Mr Milburn said the Department of Health has also issued new guidelines on the system of alert letters which warn hospitals about doctors and dentists whose performance has caused serious concern.

## ROADS

## Bumpy ride ahead for motorists

Motorists face a bumpy ride ahead because of a "dramatic cut" in motorway and trunk road repairs, it was revealed yesterday.

Only 13 major maintenance schemes are being carried out in 1997-98 compared with 150 three years ago, the British Road Federation said, adding that just £356m is being spent on £510m in 1994-95. The federation also revealed that only 54 network enhancement projects, worth less than £11m, had so far been allocated in 1997-98, compared with the £113.9m allocated in 1995-96 that allowed nearly 300 projects to go ahead. The cutbacks were outlined by the BRF as it published its 1997 Basic Roads Statistics report, which showed that there are more than 26 million vehicles on Britain's roads; car use is likely to grow by 30 per cent in the next 20 years; road users contribute around £24bn a year in vehicle and fuel tax, leaving the Treasury with a £15bn profit.

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سازمان اطلاعات



# Why the young must worry over going grey

Glenda Cooper  
Social Affairs Correspondent

Today's thirtysomethings, nurtured on the "megabyte, microfibre and media imaging" culture will become the demanding pensioners of the 21st century.

It seems hard to imagine Elizabeth Hurley, doyenne of the very little black dress, and Diana, Princess of Wales, devotee of the exercise bike, wrapped in woolly scarves and clutching their pension books in fingerless gloves.

But this generation of thirtysomethings, who are obsessed with the preservation of youth, must now begin the debate about old age and how they expect society to pay for it.

The baby boomers of the 1960s, who also include Anthea Turner and Nick Leeson, are set to become the grey boomers of tomorrow with a third of the population in 2026 aged over 60, according to a new survey.

Compared to previous generations, the grey boomers will more likely be single, without children, and have a higher level of education while experiencing unemployment and early retirement.

A decade-long baby boom began in 1961 during which more than 10 million babies were born - a larger population bulge than the earlier baby bulge cohort of the immediate post-Second World War years. Those born in the 1960s are now half way to retirement.

By 2021 the number of people over current retirement age will be 17 million, increasing the share of the "grey vote" to 34 per cent - up from less than a quarter today. Men will expect to live a further 21 years after retirement, women a further 25 years.

Twelve per cent of women and 18 per cent of men from the 1960s baby generation will not be married or living with someone by the time they reach the age of 50 (compared with 5 and 9 per cent respectively for those born in 1947).

And among those who do marry a greater proportion will divorce or separate - around 18 per cent of women



more than 90 per cent of all people who have mobility problems are helped by relatives or other household members.

But for the sixties babies the higher incidence of divorce, family break-up and childlessness will have an impact - and with increasing numbers of women in full-time employment and greater geographical mobility it is predicted that fewer women (the traditional carers) will be available to care for older relatives.

Caring is also a long-term experience. On average a fifth of people caring for someone in their own homes provide care for at least 10 years while two fifths provide care for between one and four years. With longer life expectancy many sixties babies will experience the burden of caring for a very old parent as they themselves are approaching or entering retirement. "If current policies continue, baby boomers who care for older relatives can expect even lower levels of state support and face growing charges for that support," said the study. "There is a need for a state benefit that both provides an average wage and protects lifetime living standards for those who take on full-time caring responsibilities."

The study concludes that future policy should aim to plan for phased and more flexible retirements, provide a safety net for those with low retirement incomes and improve preventative health services, health promotion and screening.

"This study is our wake-up call to today's thirtysomethings who are already half-way to retirement," said Sally Greengross, director of Age Concern England. "They will have drastically different expectations to old age to today's pensioners and more political clout - so now's the time to begin the debate about the kind of old age they will expect in the 21st century and how their society will provide for it."

*Baby boomers, ageing in the 21st Century* costs £14.95 from Age Concern England, Head Office, Astral House, 1268 London Rd, London, SW16 4ER 0181-679 8000

and 15 per cent of men born in 1961 had already witnessed the break-up of their marriage or living together by the time they were thirty.

The overall increase in the numbers living alone will be up 10 per cent for women and 15 per cent for men. Demographers predict that 21 per cent of sixties baby boom women will remain childless all their lives.

Most care for old people is at present provided by family members -



Makeover: Liz Hurley as she might look when she reaches pensionable age and (inset) in her youth. Photomanipulation: Jonathan Anstee

## Advertisers fail to see the funny side of F-word

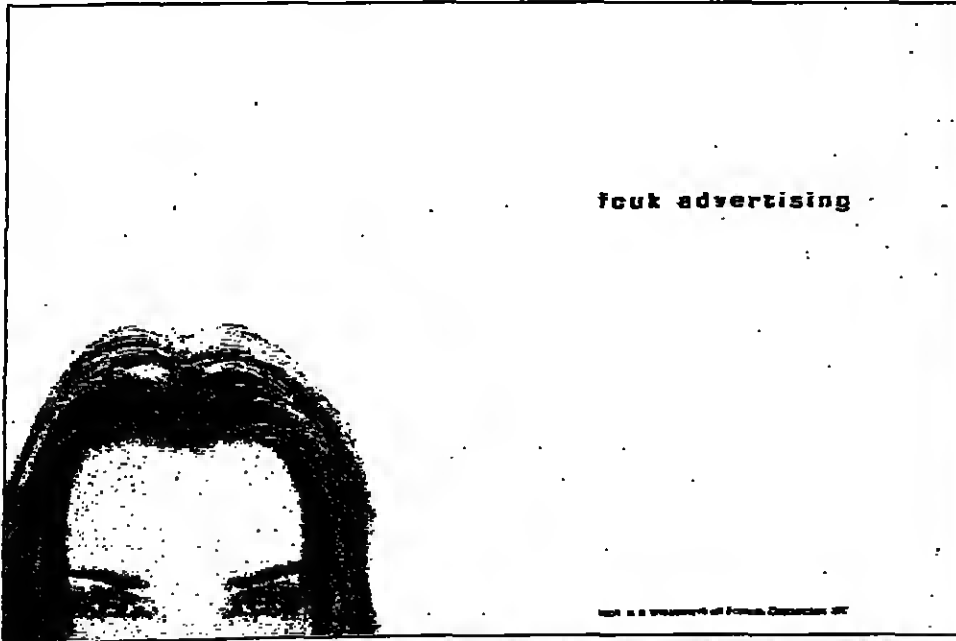
Melanie Rickey

The fashion retailer French Connection has been ordered to withdraw its current advertising campaign from style magazines.

The adverts which say "fuck advertising", and feature no clothes, just the top of a model's head, are currently featured in the September issues of *The Face*, *Arena*, *Vogue*, *FHM*, *Shy* and *Marie Claire*, but the committee of advertising protection, part of the Advertising Standards Authority, said they should not appear in the November issues.

Two months ago the company had a similar problem with a previous logo, "fuck fashion". It was used for window displays, carrier bags, T-shirts and billboards. Strangely, 50,000 T-shirts were sold, 100,000 bags given out, but only a paltry nine members of the public complained about the 150ft boards.

After the initial complaints French Connection replaced the word "fashion" with "advertising" and inserted dots between each letter for the abbreviation of the company name, and reduce offence. "We are now using it [fuck] as a trademark, just like, say, the AA or



Fashion statement: French Connection has been forced to change its advertisement

RAC," said Trevor Beatty, creative director at GGT who dreamt up the advertising. "It's a total U-turn, the magazines approved the latest campaign, and they ran the ads." Beatty was responsible for the "Hello Boys" Wonderbra campaign. The adverts can remain in

style magazines if the word "advertising" is replaced with "advertisement", but billboards with a model's head between "fuck" and "advertising" have been approved, and will be unveiled a week on Monday.

Since the company introduced their play on the f-word

into merchandising and adverts in February it has been exposed to 15,000 million people. Lilli Anderson, spokeswoman for the company, said: "It's just meant as a bit of fun, a play on words really, magazines are always using the real F-word in their editorial."

## Baby died from methadone

Steve Boggan

A young mother and a number of other people have been questioned by detectives following the death of a two-year-old boy from a drugs overdose.

Liam Darcy died last Wednesday, three days after swallowing methadone, a synthetic heroin substitute, at his grandmother's home in Solihull, West Midlands.

Police confirmed yesterday that preliminary tests on Liam's body showed he had fatal levels of the drug in his system when he was rushed to Birmingham Children's Hospital last Sunday.

At an inquest which was opened and adjourned yesterday,

Coroner Richard Whittingham said that the child was unconscious when he was taken to Birmingham's Heartlands Hospital after failing to wake up last Sunday. He was later taken to the Children's Hospital in Ladywood but died after three days.

His mother, Nicola Darcy, a veterinary nurse, and her partner, Christopher Williams, were understood to be too upset to attend the hearing.

The incident happened at the Darcy family home, to which Ms Darcy is understood to have returned recently following a disagreement with Mr Williams. A West Midlands spokeswoman confirmed that one person at the house in Hobs Meadow was a registered methadone user.

Detective Inspector John Jones, the man leading the inquiry, said: "I can confirm that a number of persons have been arrested in connection with drug-related offences, and they are currently on police bail. There is a full, on-going investigation into the circumstances surrounding this tragic case."

Last month, five Lancashire coroners spoke out about the "tremendous naivety" among the public about the number of drug overdoses. One of the five, Andre Rebello, had talks with Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, asking him to reduce the weekly amount of methadone that chemists could give addicts because it created a market for the drug.

In February last year, an inquest recorded a verdict of accidental death in the case of Daniel Fitzpatrick, a 15-month-old baby who died after drinking methadone that belonged to his mother, 19-year-old Sinead Fitzpatrick.

A three-year-old boy who made the same mistake last month Glasgow survived after being rushed to an intensive-care unit at the children's hospital in Yorkhill, Glasgow. After doctors successfully fought to save the boy's life, Sam Galbraith, the Scottish health minister, said: "This underlines the great need for parents to keep all drugs well out of reach of children. Lessons must be learnt."

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## politics

# Labour's Scottish hopefuls face stiff test of character

Fran Abrams  
Political Correspondent

Labour candidates for the Scottish Parliament will undergo "searching scrutiny" before their names can go forward, Labour announced yesterday in the wake of the Paisley affair.

Donald Dewar, the Secretary of State for Scotland, was launching his party's pro-devolution campaign just hours after the suspension of a Labour MP who was found to have been involved in smearing the Paisley South MP Gordon McMaster. He committed suicide last month though the suspended MP, the West Renfrewshire member Tommy Graham, was cleared of any part in his death.

The new measures will be in line with proposals on Westminster selections which are to be discussed at the party's October conference. Mr Dewar said Labour was determined to ensure high standards of debate and of personal behaviour.

He told a news conference that candidates would be vetted by "individuals of standing" who had no personal interest in becoming members of the Scot-

tish Parliament. "The efforts of the vast majority of decent hard-working Labour Party members must not be undermined by conduct which has everything to do with narrow self-interest and nothing to do with the principles for which Labour stands," he said.

Mr Dewar admitted that the previous few days had been "troubling" and difficult. But they should not distract from the poll on 11 September.

"A new parliament will mean

**"The efforts of hard-working party members must not be undermined"**

a new era in politics in Scotland. I am determined that the Labour Party will rise to the challenge," he added. "Out of the troubled and sad events of recent weeks, I am determined the party will emerge reformed and strengthened, and ready to help forge a new Scotland over the next 100 years."

Opinion polls in Scotland have indicated a majority of about 65 per cent in favour of the

first referendum question, on whether there should be a Parliament, but only a narrow one of about 54 per cent on whether it should have tax-raising powers.

About 20 of the 56 Scottish MPs elected on 1 May were at the launch, but Mr Graham was not among them. Nor was Mohammed Sarwar, who was also suspended after being accused of trying to bribe an election rival. Labour's news management appeared to have gone further away last night when Peter

Mandelson called for party unity just as it emerged that Clare Short had called his millennium dome "silly".

To make matters worse Mr Mandelson, who is in charge of the millennium project, was in Bolton visiting one of the companies building the dome.

In a newspaper article aimed at supporting his campaign for a seat on Labour's national executive, Mr Mandelson had

written that the Government could only succeed through unity. "I have no time for infighting or introspection. I love my party, but I also want it to be modern, professional and well-organised," he wrote.

Unfortunately for him, another newspaper had just picked up on an interview given before the election by Ms Short, the Secretary of State for International Development, to a magazine run by Calod, the Catholic aid charity.

When asked how she would like to celebrate the millennium, she had replied: "How much better than some silly, temporary building in Greenwich, is a commitment to work with other countries to eliminate abject hunger, which we could do."

At the time, Labour had not agreed to fund the dome, nor was Ms Short bound by the rule of collective responsibility which ensures that Cabinet ministers toe the line. Last night she issued a clarifying statement, saying: "As a member of the Cabinet I fully support the decision to go ahead with the millennium dome and I am sure it will be a great success."

## Lorries drive cars off the road

Randeep Ramesh  
Transport Correspondent

A national network of lorry routes, which would see private cars banned from key parts of Britain's road system, is being considered by John Prescott, the Deputy Prime Minister.

The news comes on the same day that the Government published options for an integrated transport policy - details of which were inadvertently leaked by Welsh Office transport minister Peter Hain.

The plans for the lorry routes were floated after ministers conceded that the Government had failed to strengthen hundreds of bridges to carry 40-

tonne lorries and pointed out that congestion was adding unnecessary costs to business.

Under the proposals, money could be spent to strengthen key bridges - and only allow commercial traffic to use them. It would also see lanes on busy motorways closed to cars in favour of lorries.

Last week, the Commons transport select committee warned that the delayed bridge programme could cause serious hardship to companies. Many local authorities claim they do not have sufficient funds to carry out the repair work on at least 44,000 crossings.

Ministers have already accepted that in the short-term

lanes on some bridges may have to be closed while others face weight restrictions when the new European Union-standard juggernauts are introduced in 1999.

The Road Haulage Association welcomed the news. A spokesman for the association said: "Given the problems we have with limited and dwindling road capacity, the priority for our congested road system has to be the movement of goods and services."

Motoring organisations accepted that commercial traffic needed to be considered, but not always at the expense of the private driver. "It needs a strategic approach that is not confined

to one aspect of traffic but benefits all road users," said a spokesman for the RAC.

The paper offers no immediate solutions, instead opting for bleak statements and searching questions.

Since the election, ministers have repeated that they wish to get people out of their cars and onto public transport. The document said the car remained "an integral part of modern society" but a better balance between different transport modes was needed. Asking for views on the best way to cope with congestion and pollution, the document said: "We may all have to come to terms with some difficult personal choices."



Hard hat: Peter Mandelson keeps a cool head during a visit to Watsons' steel works in Bolton yesterday to view construction of the giant legs for the millennium dome

## Fine prompts hospital safety purge

Kate Watson-Smyth

A nationwide crackdown on hospitals was launched yesterday after an NHS Trust was fined £4,000 for breaching safety regulations.

It is the first time the Health and Safety Executive has brought a case that was not prompted by a specific accident and teams have now begun visiting 40 NHS trusts around the country. They have warned that more prosecutions could follow if rule breaches were found.

Swindon and Marlborough NHS Trust admitted a single charge of breaking health and safety rules before magistrates in Swindon, Wiltshire, in a two hour hearing yesterday.

The court heard that the trust had put staff and patients at risk through a "fundamental failure" to ensure proper safety systems were in place.

The case followed a routine inspection at the trust last September which found lapses in policy and training in manual handling, the biggest single cause of hospital accidents, as well as inadequate ventilation for a hospital mortuary handling 850 post mortems a year.

The court was told the trust was guilty of a "fundamental failure" to ensure that adequate systems were in place and enforced. David Pokora, chairman of the trust, was told this had "placed undue risk, in particular on members of staff and also for patients and members of the public".

The inspection also found that the trust had no system to clearly separate clinical waste - including used syringes and dressings - from other rubbish.

Mr Pokora claimed that the difficulties had arisen from an inherited backlog of maintenance work costing £40 million.

However, the King's Fund - an independent healthcare charity, said it was "not surprised" that the trust was prosecuted. Gordon Mitchell, its spokesman, said: "Often we find they have adequate systems 'in place'... but these are not followed up."

## UCAS Listings

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Sunday 24 August	LISTINGS SUPPLEMENT (TEACHING TRAINING)
Tuesday 26 August	LISTINGS SUPPLEMENT (SCIENCE & ENGINEERING)
Thursday 28 August	LISTINGS SUPPLEMENT (AGRICULTURE)
Sunday 31 August	LISTINGS SUPPLEMENT (LANGUAGES)
Wednesday 3 September	LISTINGS SUPPLEMENT (SCIENCE & ENGINEERING)
Sunday 7 September	LISTINGS SUPPLEMENT (HUMANITIES)
Wednesday 10 September	LISTINGS SUPPLEMENT (GENERAL)
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## Storm brewing as the barred of Himbleton take custom elsewhere

Chris Mowbray

It sounds like a storyline from *The Archers*. But this is more than just an everyday tale of rural life for the residents of the Worcestershire village of Himbleton who have been barred from their local pub.

The displaced drinkers say that the licensee, Benjamin Tabary-Davies, is trying to attract a more up-market clientele to the 600-year-old Galton Arms. They claim he has barred more than 70 regulars since taking over two years ago and has tried to introduce table d'hôte and à la carte menus to bring more prosperous customers to the inn, which features oak beams and has the English flag fluttering outside.

Locals say the landlord wants to get rid of village trade and believe that a blacklist is kept behind the bar of up to 70 locals who are no longer welcome. The village cricket club's end-of-season match against regulars from

the local pub has already been marred by the controversy. By the time it was played, several members of the scratch team from the Galton Arms had been barred from their pub.

So they went into bat under the new name of the IBBBBB XI - *I've Been Banned By Bastard Ben*. Mr Tabary-Davies, who had been invited to play, did not turn up for the fixture. "Virtually all the team had been banned so we had no choice but to change the name," said the IBBBBB skipper, Vaughan Jones, who lives 100 yards from the pub.

"I was given my marching orders four weeks ago when I was accused of swearing. Mr Tabary-Davies told me I was barred just as I was leaving one night. I thought he was joking, but when I went in the next night the barman said he was not allowed to serve me."

"The place used to be heaving on a Friday night, but now there are only

half a dozen people in there. Still, I suppose it's the correct half-dozen he wants. Just wait until the winter comes and he needs the local trade. We all still meet up somewhere else so who needs the village pub?"

Mr Tabary-Davies said yesterday that everyone was welcome at the pub if they dressed nicely and were respectful to people there, but he would not tolerate bad behaviour. He denied that 70 regulars had been barred and said only a handful of players from the pub cricket team had been banned.

"Customers are still welcome to come in just for a drink and I don't mind if they are casually dressed - even in jeans and shorts. But some of the regulars used to come in straight from work on farms and building sites with their muddy boots. They used to swear a lot as well and I will not put up with effing and blinding. I have a business to run and I don't want riff-raff," he said.



No chance saloon: A drinker sups outside the Galton Arms where many regulars have been banned

Photograph: John Lawrence

## Adidas runs into trouble at Tesco



Branded: Supermarket says Adidas is a bad sport

Alexandra Williams

Customers of Britain's biggest supermarket chain can today pick up cut-price sportswear along with their frozen turkey and toilet rolls.

To the horror of Adidas, its wares go on sale at 200 Tesco stores nationwide. Some items are reduced by £20 and Tesco predicts the £2m worth of bargain goods will be snapped up within two weeks.

The whole range of Adidas footwear and clothing will be available. The deals include a pair of SL96 Plus Lea running shoes, which usually cost £49.99 but for which Tesco is charging £25, and a hooded top - normal price £37.99 - which is going for £28.

Earlier this year, it sold 30,000 pairs of Levi's jeans at 40 per cent discount. Like Levi Strauss, Adidas spends millions advertising its products and is refusing to co-operate with the supermarket chain. It is advising customers to boycott the bargains.

Anne Tyrer, spokeswoman for Adidas, said: "Adidas make high-performance, technology-based products and staff in the authentic sports retail channels can give expert advice and support, for example about stability and cushioning, at the point of purchase."

"People can be assured that it's authentic stock and the latest range. Tesco staff do not have that specialist knowledge and customers may walk away with ill-fitting clothes."

But Tesco says this is an excuse to keep the prices high

and has branded the sportswear company a "bad sport".

John Gildersleeve, commercial director at Tesco, said: "We are offering our customers big brands at unbeatable prices. For too long the brand manufacturers have argued against supplying Tesco because we don't fit certain image requirements."

"Therefore brands preserve high profit margins resulting in consumers paying more than their American counterparts - Adidas are bad sports and we want to get our shoppers running at a price they can afford."

Tesco has been backed by Nigel Griffiths, consumer affairs minister, who is examining the 1984 Trade Marks Act which is being used to prevent British companies selling imported branded goods at low prices.

Mr Griffiths said: "I want to cut artificially high prices for the British consumer. Selective distribution hits the pockets of the poorest most hard. What Tesco is doing is good news for shoppers - that is my priority."

Adidas's refusal to supply Tesco has forced the supermarket to go direct to a supplier in North America. In anticipation of the high demand, Tesco is considering limiting customers' purchases. "It would be much easier to work directly with the company to ensure a constant supply. With the Levi's jeans, some stores limited customers to one per pair."

This is the latest in a series of assaults by supermarkets on goods they deem to be overpriced. Books, medicines, skin care products and compact discs are other areas targeted.

## Mother of girl, 14, knew of pregnancy

Steve Boggan

A hospital reacted swiftly yesterday to disprove claims that its doctors had treated a 14-year-old girl during her pregnancy without telling her parents.

Ipswich Hospital found itself on the defensive after an inquest was told the girl's baby had been found dead in a canal three weeks after she secretly gave birth. But inquiries revealed that the hospital's first involvement with the child was when she was treated for a miscarriage, with her mother's consent.

The incident sparked off a fresh debate on patient confidentiality and parents' right to be involved in their children's

welfare. However, Brian Webbsell, chief executive of Ipswich Hospital NHS Trust, said he believed there had been a misunderstanding. "The girl first presented at the hospital with her mother on 16 May and a possible miscarriage was diagnosed," he said. "The child was kept in overnight and there was follow-up care, all with the mother's involvement."

At the inquest a statement from the parents said they had been "surprised" to learn that their daughter had been pregnant. "I think that could have been construed as meaning they were surprised to learn she had been having treatment. Well, she hadn't," Mr Webbsell said.

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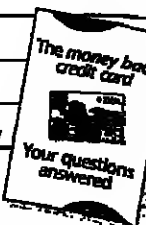
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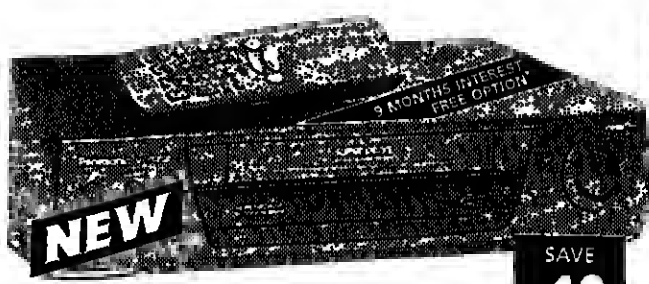
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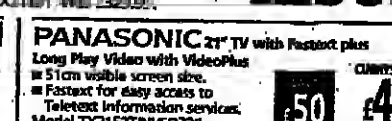


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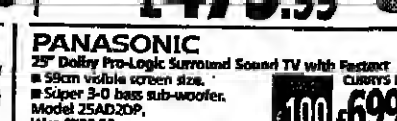


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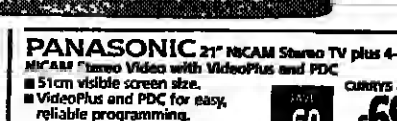


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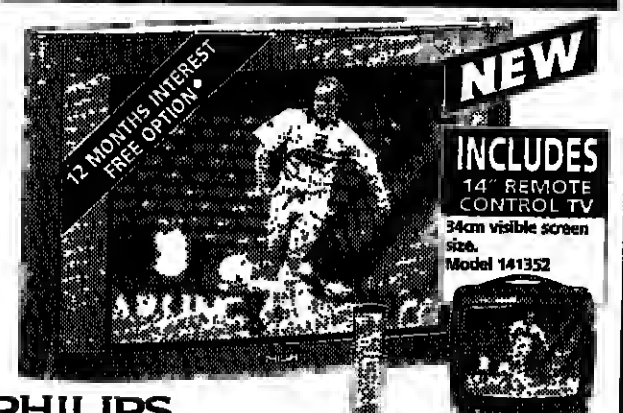
## PANASONIC

- 21" NICAM Stereo TV with Fastext
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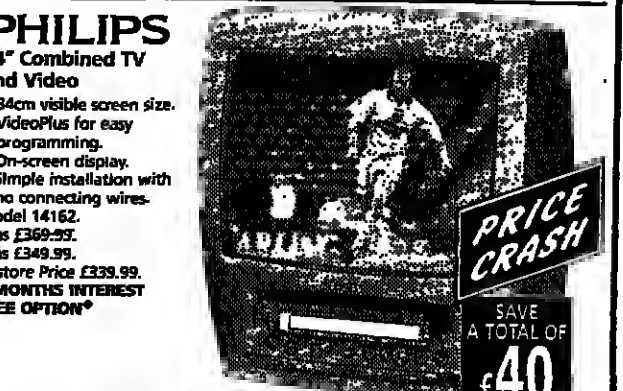
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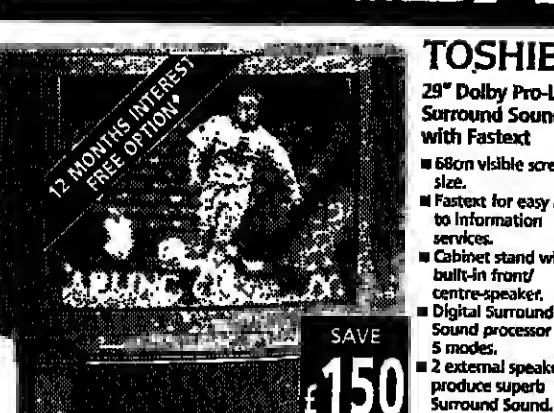


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- 2 external speakers to produce superb Surround Sound
- Model 2857. Was £899.99. Was £799.99.

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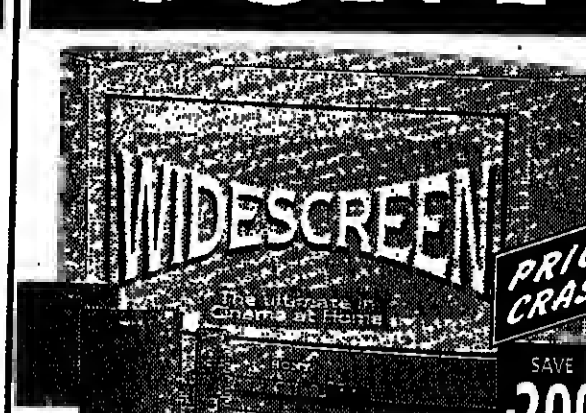


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- Model SLV720. Was £399.99.

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- Model KV25F1. Was £449.99.

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## SONY

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**Police**

Two faiths become one at Norfolk shrine

Stealth bomber ... as long as

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# Police ordered to pay £80,000 damages

Jason Bennett  
Crime Correspondent

Three men received £80,000 damages yesterday after claiming they were assaulted by police officers who then fabricated evidence against them.

The award is another blow to the Metropolitan Police, who have been forced to pay more than £20m in compensation and costs since 1986. In the year to April, the total was £2.5m.

Lawyers representing the three men who received yesterday's pay-outs said their clients had gone straight to the civil courts because they had no faith in the police complaints procedures, which they described as biased and discredited.

There is growing disquiet at the number of people obtaining damages for alleged abuse by the police and the apparent inability of chief constables to sack or discipline officers. But Sir Paul Condon, the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, has accused lawyers of milking the system and has pledged to fight more claims for damages. The police denied liability in the three most recent cases and no officer involved has been disciplined. The officers deny all the allegations.

Mark Thomas, now 26, accepted £30,000 after claiming damages for assault and injury and wrongful arrest. Mr Thomas said he was punched in the face by an officer while another officer held his arms and racially abused him during a demonstration in north-west London in 1989. In 1990, a judge ordered a jury to clear Mr Thomas of causing grievous bodily harm to a police officer and violent disorder.

In the case of Timothy Murphy and John Racz, who yesterday accepted £30,000 and £20,000 respectively, they claimed they were falsely arrested after being ejected from a pub in 1991. Mr Murphy said he was forced to the ground while officers kicked and beat him. Both men were later cleared in court of any wrongdoing.

Fiona Murphy, who represents the men, said: "They chose to pursue civil claims against the police rather than rely on the discredited police complaints process."

Lawyers are opposed to police officers investigating fellow officers, the higher standards of proof needed against the police and the lack of legal representation. Ms Murphy said the Commissioner knew of the allegations, which were aired in court, but failed to take any action against his officers. "On the contrary, he continues to deny liability, has refused to apologise and has taken no action whatsoever against the police officers, who continue to serve in the police force," she added.

## Two faiths become one at Norfolk shrine

Louise Jury

It was a small gesture bridging the religious divide. Twenty Anglicans, marked by their striking blue capes, joined nearly 1,900 Catholics to mark 100 years of modern pilgrimage to the tiny shrine at Walsingham, Norfolk.

Their presence would have been unheard of in 1897 when 40 Catholics held the first public pilgrimage to the village's Slipper Chapel after a break of 350 years.



Food for thought: A priest and a pilgrim enjoy lunch yesterday next to a memorial to Charlotte Pearson Boyd, who restored the Catholic Slipper Chapel at Walsingham and was one of the pilgrims that began going there in 1897. Photograph: Andrew Buurman

As recently as the late 1920s, Anglicans were not even allowed to enter the chapel whose name derives from the pilgrims' habit of leaving their shoes and walking a final further mile to Walsingham's ruined priory on foot.

But yesterday, it was as if the boiling sunshine had brought out a warm spirit of religious tolerance. Fr Martin Warner, the administrator of a nearby Anglican shrine, said everything was going "magnificently".

"This says quite clearly that Walsingham is a place of ecumenism," he said. Whatever divisions there are in doctrine elsewhere, he and his counterpart at the Catholic shrine, Fr Alan Williams, work together often.

Admittedly some of the guardians of the Anglican shrine have gone one step further - they actually converted to Rome. And other pilgrims have faced fierce anti-Pope demonstrations. But yesterday

Fr Warner insisted: "The experience of coming to Walsingham is one of healing. I think that's what motivates people to come here and I think that's what they discover."

As pilgrims arrived with white cotton hats, picnic hampers, garden chairs and umbrellas as parasols, the celebration had the air of a garden party rather than a religious service. The level of excitement at a sighting of the former primate of Ireland, Cardinal Cahal Daly placed him in the minor film star league. He led the open-air mass, then the procession through the tree-lined lanes of Norfolk to finish the pilgrimage.

As in days gone by, some pilgrims walked with bare feet on the scalding tarmac. Others bobbed bravely on sticks or travelled by wheelchair, reciting prayers and clutching rosary beads. A young Irish boy refused his brother a drink from his water bottle. "John Paul, it's only mineral water, let him have it," said his mother. "No it's not, ma," he replied. "I filled it up with the holy water."

A party from St John Bosco church in Blackley, Manchester, had left home at 6.30am to get to what is regarded as Nazareth for Britain's Catholics, their most important religious site. Agnes Lewis, 58, a retired teacher, came because she has been recently widowed after caring for her sick husband for some time. "It was just something I felt I wanted to do," she said.

Sheila Pawson, 47, a medical secretary, comes regularly with the diocese. Pauline Millington, 50, also a medical secretary, was on her first visit. None had known the Anglicans were invited, though all thought it a good thing. "I think it's good we're all together," she said. Ms Millington agreed. "Things are changing."

Peter Brogan, 43, a deacon from Lincoln, was on holiday with wife Mary, 37, and three of their children. "I think we've got to be more ecumenical now," he said. "The one important thing that we've got to realise is that we're a Christian country."

## Stealth bomber is invisible ... as long as it doesn't rain

Charles Arthur  
Science Editor

It is one of the most feared weapons in the US arsenal: an airplane invisible to radar, which can fly in and drop its bombs before flying elusively away.

But a new US government report has put a damper on the B-2 "Stealth" bomber's reputation. If you leave the airplane in the rain, the report reveals, its special powers rapidly erode: the composite coating that absorbs radar signals is destroyed by water.

Even worse, according to the US Government Accounting Office (GAO), the special plastic and metal composite coating the \$2.2bn B-2 bombers also loses its invisibility if exposed to humidity or excess heat. To be functional abroad, B-2s would have to be kept in giant air-conditioned hangars - and even then, where maintenance crews will find themselves spending 39 per cent of their time repairing the damage caused to the material which covers the aircraft. To repair



Flight of fancy: The US government has spent \$43bn on the B-2 stealth bomber

properly, the material needs a cool, dry environment to "cure" correctly.

A report, published this week by the GAO, which monitors public spending, notes that the 29 B-2 bombers ordered, at a total cost of \$44.7bn, "cannot meet their intended deployment requirements because the low observability features are more sensitive to climate and moisture than expected".

Ideal conditions would be a desert - hot even that carries hazards. Night temperatures can drop below freezing in the desert - and the GAO learned that "if moisture or water freezes in the B-2 it can take 24 hours to thaw and drain".

So far, the US Air Force has spent about \$43bn of the budgeted \$44.7bn it will cost to get the 21 aircraft into the sky by 1999. But the GAO warned that the need for special hangars will drive up costs even further.

In a response to the GAO report, the US Department of Defense managed to look on the only bright side remaining.

"Sheltering the plane facilitates maintenance," it said. "It also protects the low-observability surfaces from damage." It had no comment on the cost of air-conditioned hangars.

John Pike, an analyst with the Federation of American Scientists, said: "At this point the B-2's got an awful lot to do with money and politics and not much to do with defence."

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## news

# Crisis as Colombian refugees flood into Britain

Ian Burrell

The Government's commitment to human rights has been called into question over its response to a sudden influx of Colombian refugees.

The South American country is being torn apart by fighting between right-wing paramilitary groups, left-wing revolutionaries and state-controlled forces.

The Government's first set of immigration statistics, revealed today, will show that thousands of Colombians have fled to seek asylum in Britain. Nearly all have been refused entry.

Yesterday the Government faced further problems over immigration as the Campsfield detention centre in Oxfordshire erupted into violence.

Fires were started in the dormitories and library as 50 inmates, all awaiting immigration clearance, went on the

rampage. More than 100 police officers, many in riot gear, were called to quell the disturbance.

The Government is struggling with a backlog of 53,000 asylum applications and 22,000 appeals from rejected applicants.

But it is the clampdown by immigration officials on Colombians which has particularly concerned organisations working with refugees who believe innocent people have been put at risk of assassination.

By May, asylum applications from Colombia were up 500 per cent on 1996, when there were a record 1,005 applicants.

Next month the Refugee Council will produce a report, *Caught in the Crossfire*, which will claim that officials have turned down many asylum applications because of a lack of understanding of human rights issues in Colombia.

Tony Kay, who researched



Making a stand: Demonstrators gathered outside the Colombian Embassy in Knightsbridge, London, to protest about the country's human rights record. Photograph: John Lawrence

outside the Colombian embassy in Knightsbridge over the country's human rights record.

The increase in violence over the past year has coincided with an exodus of refugees to Britain and elsewhere. But within a month of the election, the Government clamped down on the influx by introducing a new visa requirement for all Colombians coming to Britain.

In a speech that was unreported by the press, Mike O'Brien, the immigration minister, warned of the "increasing and alarming" numbers of Colombians making "unfounded" claims for asylum.

Since the change in the law, monthly asylum applications from Colombia have tumbled from nearly 250 to just 15.

Refugee support groups said that people fleeing persecution were often among the 1 million displaced Colombians and were unable to produce evidence of a home and a job, which is usually required for a visa.

Some members of the British Colombian community, numbering around 50,000 and concentrated in London, fear they are being stigmatised over police fears that Colombian drugs cartels are targeting Britain.

In an attempt to improve the situation, the Refugee Council has held a series of private meetings with Home Office officials in recent weeks, aimed at making the treatment of Colombians more "fair and efficient".

the report, said: "They have not got a proper appreciation of the human rights violations going on in the ground because the situation is changing so quickly."

The report will show that members of M19, once a left-wing guerrilla group but now a legitimate political party, have been refused asylum on the

grounds that their legal status means they can now expect protection from the Colombian government. Similar assurances were given in refusing applications from members of the left-wing coalition Unico Patriótica (UP), which has lost 3,500 activists to political assassination. But Juan-Carlos Lemus, of the

Londoo-based Colombian support group Opeo Channels, said: "The fact that M19 became a political party does not mean they are not at risk. A lot of people want to have revenge and the government is too weak to give protection." Claude Moraes, of the Joint Council for the Welfare of Im-

migrants, said that despite Labour pledges of reform, a "general culture of disbelief" remained among the Home Office officials who deal with asylum-seekers. The criticisms will co-operate Labour after its pledges to uphold human rights.

Amnesty International says government forces have fre-

quently co-operated with right-wing paramilitaries, who are responsible for a dramatic escalation of "torture, political killings and disappearances".

More than 1,000 civilians were extrajudicially executed by the security forces and paramilitary groups last year. This week protesters demonstrated

## GCSEs: the provisional results

Fewer students entered for GCSE science subjects this year. Last year, an increase in entries in physics, chemistry and biology raised hopes of an improvement in the take-up of science in the sixth form, writes Judith Judd.

Numbers entering for combined science increased. Overall, the proportion of entries awarded A\*-C in science was up by 0.2 percentage points.

The figure for maths rose by 0.6 and for

English decreased by 0.8.

This year's table is different from last year's because the figures, all provisional, include all GCSE subjects.

Last year, only major subjects were included in the statistics.

David Hart, general secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers, attacked the concentration on A\*-C grades on which school league tables are based.

"The fact that 73 per

cent of pupils achieved

grade D or better is a success story which the Government totally ignores by its insistence that GCSE league tables should emphasise those who have achieved five or more A-C grades, thus replicating

the attitude of previous administrations," he said.

"This year's results demonstrate that the perpetual emphasis on A-C grades is damaging the interests of the less able."

Subject	Number of candidates	1996 figures shown in italics							
		Cumulative percentage of candidates gaining grade or better							
		A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Art & Design	221 543	5.5	18.8	36.5	62.1	80.1	91.5	97.3	99.6
	228 882	4.6	16.9	34.3	59.2	77.9	90.4	96.8	98.5
Business Studies	115 498	2.2	10.5	25.7	51.1	70.7	83.1	92.0	96.8
	114 848	2.1	9.8	23.8	49.1	69.5	81.9	91.3	96.3
Classical Civilization	3644	6.9	28.1	52.1	75.1	88.0	92.0	94.7	96.4
	3447	6.0	25.9	49.9	74.1	87.7	91.5	94.9	94.4
Drama	85 500	3.5	19.5	45.4	69.6	84.5	93.6	97.9	99.5
	82 165	3.7	20.7	47.9	72.5	87.0	94.8	98.4	99.6
Economics	9600	3.1	16.7	38.9	64.5	82.0	88.9	93.8	96.2
	11 127	2.9	15.4	36.0	61.7	79.6	87.7	92.8	95.6
English	649 559	2.0	10.7	29.5	56.0	78.0	90.4	97.2	99.5
	663 009	2.0	11.0	30.3	56.8	78.6	90.5	97.2	99.5
English Literature	492 678	2.8	13.7	35.5	62.2	80.7	91.7	97.6	99.4
	491 890	2.7	13.9	36.2	63.2	81.7	92.7	97.8	99.5
French	328 299	4.1	19.2	34.1	51.2	69.8	83.2	94.0	99.2
	345 590	4.4	19.2	33.7	50.9	69.1	82.6	93.7	99.3
Geography	290 201	3.9	16.4	34.9	55.1	71.9	85.1	94.1	98.4
	322 308	4.0	15.8	33.5	53.7	70.9	84.5	93.7	98.2
German	132 615	5.7	22.0	37.4	55.9	73.9	86.0	94.9	99.0
	133 177	5.3	21.3	37.0	55.6	73.2	85.1	94.8	99.2
Greek	947	50.7	76.9	88.4	96.0	99.0	99.4	99.4	99.5
	885	48.0	72.5	87.0	94.2	97.5	97.9	98.0	98.0
History	227 447	4.3	17.5	38.0	58.0	72.9	84.4	92.5	97.6
	230 011	4.1	16.8	36.8	57.0	72.0	83.8	92.4	97.5
Home Economics	104 863	1.8	9.6	24.5	44.1	64.9	82.5	93.3	98.2
	97 493	1.9	8.7	23.4	43.2	64.0	81.8	93.2	98.1
(Integrated) Humanities	35 562	2.2	9.6	23.2	42.1	61.6	78.9	91.2	97.9
	45 882	2.3	10.6	25.4	44.1	61.7	77.4	90.5	98.4
Information Systems/Computing	76 043	2.8	12.3	32.7	57.1	75.2	87.4	94.3	97.4
	66 134	2.7	11.4	30.3	53.3	73.3	85.8	93.4	97.1
Latin	11 673	26.8	59.2	79.8	91.4	96.5	97.4	97.8	98.0
	12 174	21.1	54.6	77.0	89.8	96.0	96.9	97.4	97.8
Mathematics	681 265	2.1	9.6	24.2	47.3	63.8	79.4	91.6	97.9
	698 330	2.1	8.1	23.4	46.7	63.1	78.8	91.3	97.8
Music	43 430	6.7	25.7	50.1	70.1	82.8	91.3	96.5	99.1
	42 122	6.8	24.9	48.5	69.1	82.0	90.9	96.5	99.2
Physical Education	87 106	4.4	13.5	28.6	47.5	72.6	88.6	96.7	99.3
	80 031	3.8	12.7	27.7	46.5	70.6	87.7	96.2	99.2
Religious Studies	118 545	4.9	17.0	35.7	56.7	71.8	83.4	91.9	97.2
	116 548	4.4	16.4	33.2	54.9	70.6	82.7	91.6	96.8
Science/Biology	47 743	10.6	35.0	65.1	84.5	92.9	97.2	99.0	99.2
	46 276	10.5	33.5	63.8	83.4	92.5	97.0	99.0	99.2
Science/Chemistry	45 797	13.7	35.6	64.9	86.8	94.2	97.7	99.0	99.2
	46 885	11.5	34.2	63.6	86.0	94.0	97.5	98.5	99.3
Science/Combined	1 007 640	3.5	10.4	28.0	48.4	70.2	88.4	95.5	98.3
	997 422	3.1	10.2	27.8	48.2	69.8	88.1	95.4	98.4
Science/Physics	44 892	13.6	36.7	65.7	86.2	93.8	97.6	99.1	99.2
	46 446	13.3	35.3	65.5	85.3	92.9	97.0	98.8	99.0
Social Sciences	4397	1.1	5.6	18.8	38.3	59.5	75.1	88.1	95.1
	4441	0.7	4.4	15.0	36.9	57.6	72.6	85.8	93.8
Spanish	43 826	8.4	29.4	44.9	59.3	73.1	83.3	93.9	98.2
	42 592	7.7	28.3	43.4	58.4	74.0	84.4	94.1	98.0
Technology	235 877	1.8	9.4	23.4	46.9	67.4	83.7	93.9	98.4
	247 821	1.7	8.9	23.5	45.8	66.1	82.5	93.4	98.4
Welsh First Language	3809	2.0	13.1	33.2	62.0	83.4	94.1	98.0	99.6
	3844	1.7	12.0	31.4	60.1	83.3	93.8	98.8	99.6
Welsh Second Language	7438	10.8	27.0	40.7	59.8	76.4	88.1	95.4	98.5
	7848	10.6	26.4	41.5	59.2	75.0	86.7	94.6	98.4
Welsh Literature	2931	3.1	15.7	33.5	62.1	90.0	90.4	95.8	98.7
	2940	3.9	13.8	30.7	57.8	88.2	89.6	94.9	98.0
Combined Subjects	31 011	1.1	8.0	26.0	49.6	69.7	85.1	94.9	99.0
	37 334	0.9	8.8	23.6	46.1	66.5	83.0	93.5	98.5
Other Modern Languages	29 934	17.8	47.3	64.0	76.4	87.1	93.3	97.7	99.8
	28 869	16.1	46.4	62.8	75.6	85.8	93.0	97.7	99.7
Other Sciences	26 336	2.9	10.7	28.1	49.5	70.4	84.8	90.6	93.0
	26 336	2.8	10.8	26.7	50.0	69.6	83.8	89.7	92.0
Other Social Sciences	36 769	2.2	11.5	31.2	60.3	80.2	86.9	91.1	93.1
	41 559	2.0	11.6	31.8	61.2	80.1	86.3	90.3	92.3
Other Technology	22 852	2.4	11.5	25.1	44.0	62.0	79.0	91.2	97.5
	23 397	2.8	12.3	26.6	44.8	64.4	81.6	92.7	98.2
All Other Subjects	109 748	2.2	12.6	31.8	56.8	75.3	87.9	95.2	98.5
	112 817	2.3	12.3	31.6	56.1	74.9	87.7	95.1	98.6
All Subjects	5 415 176	3.6	14.0	32.1	54.4	73.1	86.5	94.9	98.5
	5 475 872	3.4	13.7	31.7	54.0	72.8	86.0	94.7	98.3

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# Silent danger lurks in the shadowy olive groves of Lebanon

In the darkness, all five Norwegian soldiers hold out their right hands, one on top of the other. "En for alle - alle for en," Lieutenant Vidar "Sims" Simonsen mutters. "Alle mann tilbakke." All for one and one for all - and we'll all come back together. I am surprised how seriously the men take this Alexandre Dumas routine - until the armoured vehicle in which we are entombed halts in the moonlight and we climb out on the mountainside. Until morning, we will not talk again. We will lie in wait along the infiltration trails and watch through our night-sight binoculars and prow through the olive groves which, in the darkness, look like forests. Even the savage old dog Eddie, and his handler, Private Stian Kleppe, move like shadows.

It is not an easy United Nations patrol. The moon above the Litani river - deep inside Israel's south Lebanon occupation zone - moves in and out of the clouds; and as our eyes become accustomed to the dark, its sudden appearance almost dazzles us. From the blackness of the grove, the trail the Hizbollah probably took when they mortared another Israeli fortress two weeks ago.



**Robert Fisk goes on night patrol with the Norwegian peace-keepers of UN Observation Post 4-27**

In this brilliance, I can see Private Tor Sandvik lying huddled beside his 11kg radio, whispering "Alpha One X-Ray Papa moving to Alpha One Lima." Papa is our patrol, Lima is a little sandbagged fort over the river half a mile away, but it will take us an hour to reach it.

Far over the hills to the north, beyond an abandoned Israeli compound, there comes the boom of heavy firing. We are lying only feet from the pale grey track through the olive grove, the trail the Hizbollah probably took when they mortared another Israeli fortress two weeks ago.

Lying quiet in a south Lebanese orchard beneath a fitful moon sounded pleasant enough back at the platoon's headquarters. But within seconds, the mosquitoes are shrieking in my ears. Any movement, even the silent swatting of these evil little aviators, is forbidden.

I am lying with my hands beside me, until I feel my fingers being criss-crossed by tiny feet. I cannot see the insects but they are quietly feeding on me. So that, I conclude was why Private Mortuo Haagenstad offered me leather gloves tonight. The hardy Fisk, of course, had turned down this eminently sensible proposal. To my left, I see Sims patting silently at his trousers where a scorpion is attacking him. I stuff my wounded hands inside my flask jacket. They will torment me for days.

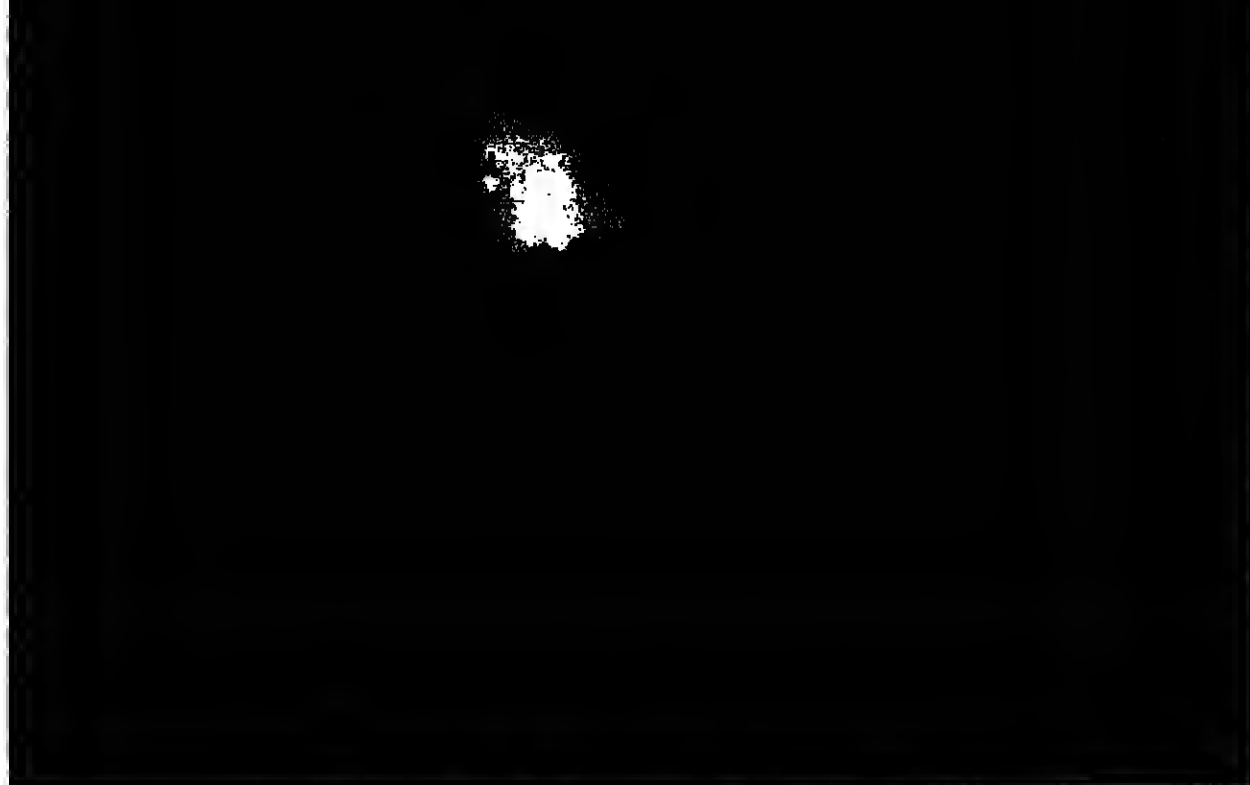
Two helicopters fly far overhead. Later, we will hear one of them firing a heavy machine-gun into a wadi. But to our left, Eddie has pricked up his ears and is straining forward in the darkness. I like Eddie. When he is angry - which is often - he eats rocks, which is why his teeth have been ground down over eight years patrolling with the Norwegians. But he keeps the platoon's silence discipline, only occasionally allowing a paw to scrape the ground or panting softly in dog-like excitement. Sims points into the olive grove. A tiny light flickers in the far

away village of Bourhoz - 35 Druze souls living in a battlefield - and Sims thinks as I am thinking (so he tells me later), that the village boy who was beaten up by the Hizbollah last year, is moving. The UN soldiers call him "Lightman".

Then I see another light, far away in the abandoned Israeli fort on the other side of the river. Sims believes the Israelis leave it on to give the impression that it is still occupied.

There is more distant firing, mortars this time, but Eddie concentrates on the olive grove. I hear rustling. Sims has reminded us at our briefing that the Hizbollah could not maintain silence at night. Nor could the Israelis if they too were in the UN zone. Sims' job is to keep both of them out. We cannot move off our own "blue line" path - the only route cleared of mines - but we can shout "Halt - United Nations" (the phrase, of course, that has sent many a quivering Serb to his knees) and hope that whoever is there goes away. Five rifles point into the darkness in case it does not. All the while, the firing continues over the mountains. Theo I see Sims turning to the soldiers. The sound has grown fainter. Eddie is back on his haunches. We will never know what was out there in the olive grove.

Two pigs. The moon has fallen behind the mountains. High on our perch at Alpha One Lima, we stare down into the valley of the Litani through our night-sights. I can see trees and clearings and tracks through the undergrowth, the trails used by Hizbollah and Israelis alike. A rock slides down the opposite side of the valley. "Two pigs," Sims whispers. "I saw them." Wild boars roam southern Lebanon at night. They also, according to the locals, eat bodies.



Open fire: Brush burning across the Litani valley, seen through night sights during the patrol Photograph: Robert Fisk

The hours pass wretchedly. The insects feed. And the mosquitoes are now air-raiding our faces every 30 seconds. Sweat is creeping under my flask jacket and down my arms. At four am, Sims decides to end his patrol by taking a closer look at the terrain. He calls up mortar illuminations and the Norwegians to the south shoot three flares high above us, the charges popping in the darkness. They are fired too far to the east and one of them sets off a brush fire on the other side of the river.

Sims points his own flare pistol over the abyss and a snake of red light hisses from our fortress. Eddie snarls in rage and I peer down to the river through my night-sights. Every tree branch, every twig is bathed

in our Olympian light. And now a movement do we see. But looking north, Sims notices that the light in the "abandoned" Israeli fort has been turned off. "Do you think it's abandoned now?" he asks in my ear. No, I do not think so. As our last flares die in the darkness below, the Israeli light flickers on again. We have not been alone.

## Israel retaliates for Hizbollah attack

Sidon, Lebanon - Israel's air force launched its biggest attack into Lebanon for 18 months yesterday in retaliation for a Hizbollah rocket barrage against the Jewish state.

Warplanes blasted a power line feeding south Lebanon's largest city and Hizbollah bases west of the border with Syria, and dropped bombs near a Lebanese Army position.

The three strikes, in the space of two hours, added to a spiral of violence that began on Monday and has pushed to the brink of collapse a 1996 agreement not to target civilians on the last active Arab-Israeli front line.

The attacks were accompanied by tough talk on both sides of the border that has left many Lebanese in the south bracing for another cycle of bloodshed.

Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik al-Hariri accused Israel of fuelling instability in the region while his Defence Minister described the air raids as "terrorist" acts.

Nazih Nakouzi  
Reuters

## British troops block Bosnia police coup

Christopher Bellamy  
Defence Correspondent

British and Czech troops supported by US Apache gunship helicopters raided police stations in the Bosnian Serb town of Banja Luka yesterday morning and seized 2,500 weapons in an operation to smash a possible coup against the elected President Biljana Plavsic.

Ms Plavsic has been struggling to maintain her authority over rivals still loyal to the indicted war criminal and ex-president, Radovan Karadzic. Yesterday's operation succeeded, and at 0800 she made a triumphant visit to the main police station where she was cheered by several hundred onlookers.

The dramatic action by international peace-keepers was a result of "mutual agreement" with Ms Plavsic, whom they met late on Tuesday, and clearly de-

signed to avert a coup against her. It suggests that a move to seize Mr Karadzic and his "number two", General Ratko Mladic, may be imminent.

At about 6.30am, 350 British and Czech soldiers from the Nato-led multinational stabilisation force - S-For - in 50 vehicles sealed off the Banja Luka police headquarters, the police academy, a special police barracks and three police stations, while the US Apaches hovered overhead. Some of the Bosnian Serbs refused to leave and vowed to "fight to the death".

Five minutes before S-For's ultimatum expired, they came out with their hands up. Officers from the International Police Task Force entered the police stations and found large numbers of unauthorised weapons including machine-guns, rocket launchers and mines, the force's deputy commander,

Werner Schum, said. S-For had to bring in three trucks to take 2,500 weapons away.

"S-For met no resistance. S-For is in control. We have deployed sufficient resources to meet any anticipated requirements", its spokesman, Major John Blakeley, said in Sarajevo.

Banja Luka - the second city of the Bosnian Serb mini-state - is also the headquarters of the British-controlled sector. On Sunday, a special police unit loyal to Ms Plavsic raided the main police station after evidence emerged that the police were backing Ms Plavsic's rivals and bugging her telephones with a view to arresting her.

S-For disarmed the police - but that left Ms Plavsic virtually defenceless as about 100 pro-Karadzic police moved into Banja Luka putting her in what international officials described as a "critical situation".

## Iran moderates win parliament's backing

Tehran (Reuters) - Iran's parliament yesterday voted in all the ministers in the proposed cabinet of President Mohammad Khatami, giving the moderate cleric a strong start for his reform mandate.

Parliamentary deputies voted overwhelmingly in favour of all ministers despite fierce criticism from conservatives who had threatened to reject some controversial nominees.

It had been expected that Mr Khatami could lose two candidates - Ayatollah Mohajerani as culture minister and Abdollah Nouri as interior minister - after they came under fire in more than 15 hours of debate on Tuesday and yesterday.

The vote confirmed Kamal Kharrazi, Iran's ambassador at the United Nations, as the new foreign minister, navy commander Rear-Admiral Ali Shamkhani as defence minister, and Qorbanali Dorri Najafabadi, a Shia Muslim cleric, as intelligence (internal security).

It also confirmed Bijan Namdar Zanganeh, who was a minister in charge of electricity and water, as oil minister of the world's third largest oil exporter and Hossein Namazi as the economy and finance minister, a post he first held from 1982 to 1986.

Mr Mohajerani, who had been sharply criticised by conservative deputies, received 144 votes in his favour, 96 against and 20 abstentions.

Parliament's vote of confidence on Mr Khatami's entire cabinet was seen by analysts as a major victory for the 54-year-old moderate Shia Muslim cleric who was sworn into office on 4 August after securing a landslide election victory in May. The margin of votes indicated that he had won over a large section of the conservative-led parliament which he has to work with until the next parliamentary elections in 2000. The vote of confidence for Mr Mohajerani was seen as vital for

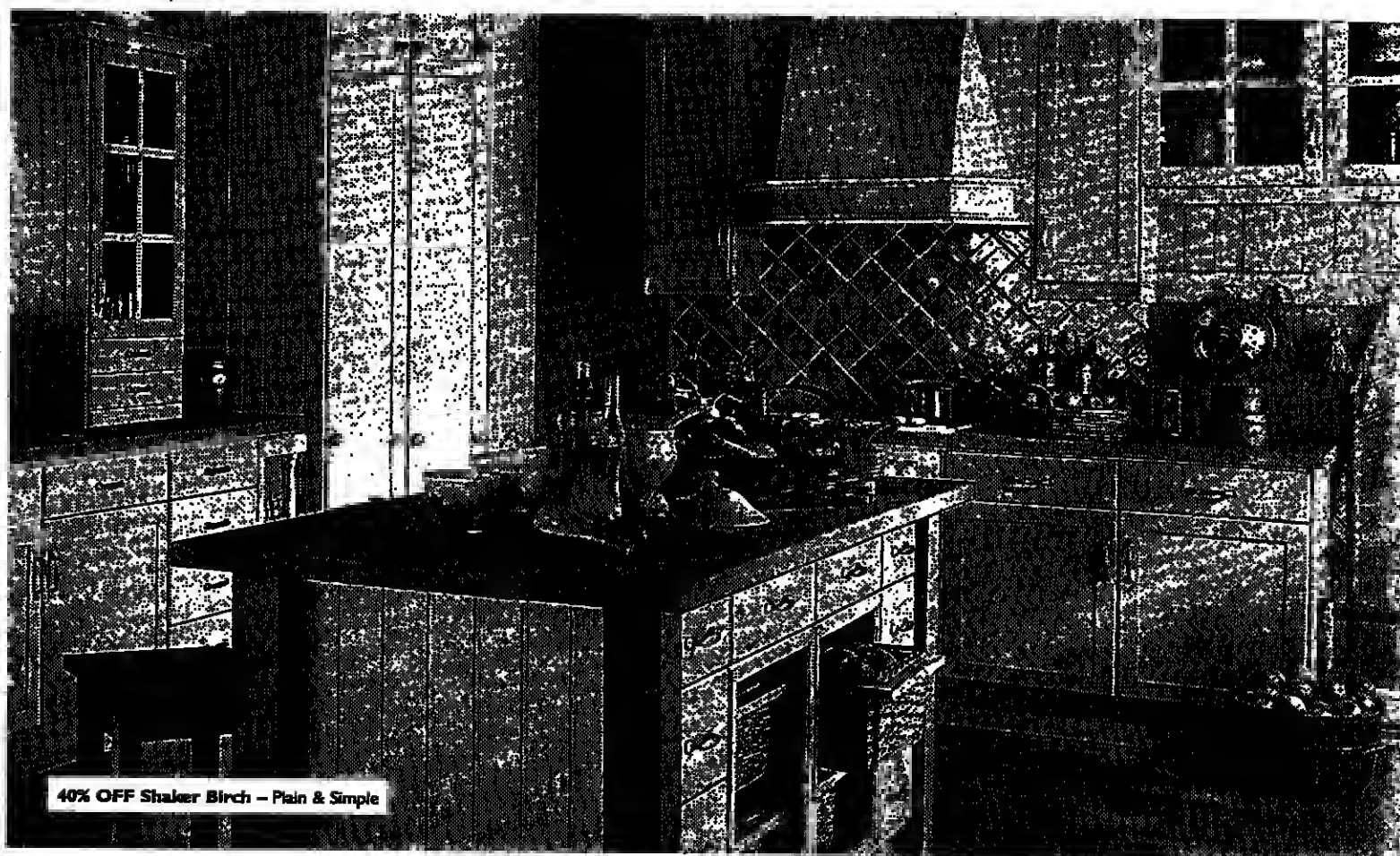
Mr Khatami to carry out promises of bringing social and economic change to the 18-year-old Islamic republic.

Conservatives had directed their sharpest criticism at Mr Mohajerani as a "liberal" threatening the future of the Islamic republic and Mr Nouri for alleged disloyalty towards Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Mr Mohajerani defended his right to be appointed to the cabinet saying he was tolerant in the same way that Islam was tolerant to different view points. "I disagree with almost all of the present practices in the culture ministry. We have to protect artists and provide an atmosphere for creativity, tranquillity and freedom," he told deputies. "Everybody who has accepted the Islamic Republic and its constitution must be subject to tolerance ... I condemn the burning of book shops, the beating of university lecturers and attacks on magazine offices."

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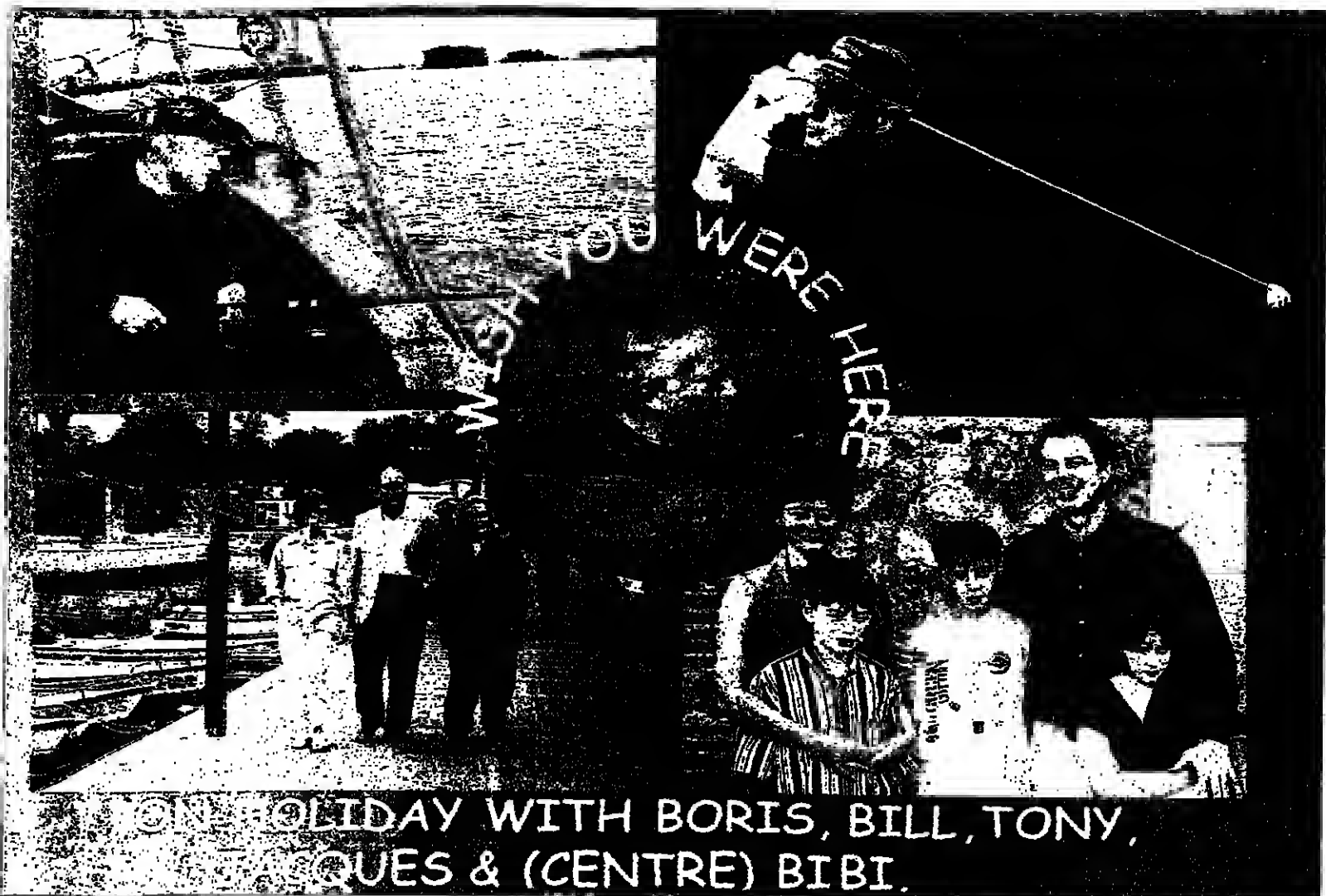
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## international



## It's summer – and world leaders head for sun, sea and a little state business

### Foreign Staff

Across the globe, trouser legs are being rolled up and sun cream rubbed in. It is the holiday season, for everyone – including world leaders.

The world's swankiest hotels, best beaches and tightest security are at the disposal of heads of government. Benjamin Netanyahu takes a photocall in the Mediterranean with his family, and a phalanx of bodyguards. Jacques Chirac chooses a tropical hotel patronised by royalty and pop stars. And Peking's leaders have the best beaches at the popular Chinese resort of Beida He cordoned off for their private use.

But many choose a simpler holiday. Informality, epitomised by Tony Blair, is very much in

### Blair family leads in informality, while Jiang takes the whole office to the beach

tune with the holiday manners of the modern world leader.

Mr Blair, polishing his European credentials, has spent half his holiday in Tuscany and half in France, where he will later this week meet with Lionel Jospin, his Socialist counterpart the French Prime Minister. "I know he lives nearby. We will see one another," said Mr Blair, as though he hoped to bump into Mr Jospin in the fresh fruit and vegetable section of the local hypermarché. Increasingly, business and leisure are mixed.

The Clintons showed the common touch by dressing in baggy T-shirts and running shorts. But they were at Martha's Vineyard, that ultra-trendy haunt of the monied, old and new, and the White House press corps went along too, for staged photo-opportunities and "impromptu" statements on current events.

Russia's Boris Yeltsin spent half his holiday on the Volga and half in Kareli in the north, where he relaxed in a newly renovated government dacha by a lake, which was closed to the public and filled with thousands of fish to ensure the President's success with rod and line.

The working element of the holiday in Kareli was that Mr Yeltsin played host to the Finnish President, Martti Ahtisaari. It must have been an odd experience for Mr Ahtisaari to be a guest in Kareli, which used to belong to Finland until the Soviet Union seized it at the end of the Second World War. Perhaps even odder, he found himself in a sauna being energetically beaten with birch twigs by the President of Russia, an experience few will be able to record on their postcards.

In the past, Israeli prime ministers did not usually take holidays – or if they did, they followed so discreetly to one noticed. But Benjamin Netanyahu has broken the mould this summer. He is Israel's first yuppie prime minister, the first to have grown up in the less austere climate of the US, the first to have small children while in office.

Inevitably, the Netanyahus being the Netanyahus, the holiday he began last Wednesday

turned into one big photo-opportunity. Bibi, Sara and their two sons, Yair, six, and Avner, two, playing on the beach at Caesarea, the upmarket Mediterranean resort where a businessman friend lent them his villa. Hizbollah, alas, spoilt the fun. Mr Netanyahu broke his vacation on Tuesday to sympathise with the people of Kibyat Shmona, whose homes were hit by Katyusha rockets from Lebanon.

The French President, Jacques Chirac, has just finished his holiday, and returned to Paris on Tuesday after three weeks in the tropics. He started in La Réunion, in the Indian Ocean, and then moved on to Mauritius, 150 miles away. One of the advantages of a colonial heritage is that La Réunion is under French control, and is not considered a colony, but rather as a French territory. Mr Chirac was staying with his wife Bernadette, their daughter and their grandson, in a hotel which has entertained the likes of Princess Stephanie of Monaco and the singer James Brown.

Perhaps the least relaxed holidaymakers are the leaders of the Peoples' Republic of China. Far from getting away from it all for his holidays, China's leader takes the office and all his senior colleagues with him for his summer break. President Jiang Zemin and his entourage descend every year on the seaside resort of Beida He, about 150 miles east of Peking.

Beida He has a lively holiday atmosphere – at least where the masses play. The town is rather like Blackpool, with a strange form of apartheid imposed upon it. To the east, the public beaches are thronged with state work units on their official holidays: to the west, the often-deserted best beach is cordoned off for the senior leaders and no curious passers-by are allowed anywhere near.

Although he has two luxurious official residences and a posh Johannesburg home, when President Nelson Mandela takes his month-long summer holiday he heads for Qunu. Here he has had a replica of his old quarters at Victor Verster prison, a modest red-brick bungalow, built in the wilds of the Transkei.

His mother, who died during his 27-year incarceration, once lived across the road. And Mr Mandela has a simple explanation for his choice of destination: "Everybody comes back to where they were born," he says.

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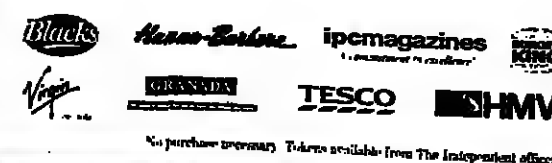


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**in Section Two.**



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السنة من الامتحان



## Harvest of death as a grain store explodes



Digging for life: Rescue workers searching in the wreckage of a grain silo after it exploded yesterday in the city of Blaye, in south-west France. Eleven people were buried beneath tons of grain and rubble and were feared dead

## French vineyard owners set to reap a vintage harvest

Joanna Lee  
Paris

After two very good years for wine, French vineyard owners already had dollar signs flashing before their eyes as they looked forward to a harvest that is likely to be even better than the last two. All the signs are now indicating that 1997 could be one of the best vintages in decades.

As early as 4 August grape-picking began in Rivesaltes, north of Perpignan; and on Monday the Haut Brion chateau near Bordeaux announced that it would begin the grape harvest for white wine grapes on Monday, and for red wine at the end of the week. Grapes have not been ready for harvest this early since 1893.

Jean-Bernard Delmas, the chateau's director of commerce, explained that "the harvest usually takes place between 20-25 September ... but from the mouth of May it was clear that we would be harvesting early because the grapes were already very mature." Bottles from the last early harvest, in 1990, are now selling for several hundred pounds.

Other vineyards have also announced that they will begin harvesting this week, such as Couhins-Couton, Latour Martillac, Fieuzal and Chevalier. All these chateaux are in the Graves region in Bordeaux. The vineyards in the region of Cotes du Rhone are preparing for grape-picking next Monday and across France, wine producers are getting ready for an early harvest, even further north in the regions of the Loire.

The maturity of this year's crop is due to the very hot, sunny spring, and it not only promises good wine, but also means

that the farmers have more time to harvest, which allows them to pick the grapes at the right time. The warmer weather of an early harvest also means that the alcohol levels are generally fairly high.

Even the heavy rain in July that flooded much of Eastern Europe, and made for a lot of wet summer holidays on the Mediterranean, was not a catastrophe for the wine merchants. Although it did destroy some grapes, some rain was essential to speed up the ripening process. The only disadvantage is for the grape-pickers, who will have to go through the vines with greater care, getting rid of the spoiled crop.

Some predictions are more cautious than others: Philippe Raymond, from the Wine Producers' Union in Saint Emilion, said: "Only a catastrophe with the weather would pose any threat to the harvests now, but we shall have to wait and see if the sun continues to shine in the next few weeks before we know if those crops which are not yet ready will be exceptional." Likewise, Fabrice Fatin, director of the Wine and Tourist office in Pauillac, in the Haut-Medoc, said: "All exceptional vintages do come from early harvests, but all early harvests do not necessarily produce good vintages."

Nevertheless, smiles are broad on the faces of most of those involved in the wine industry. A union official from the Bordeaux area said that they are "optimistic and relaxed", and a vineyard owner from Gaillac, in the South-west said he will get a relatively small quantity of wine, but it will be of excellent quality.

As for the weather, one vineyard owner in the Loire region said: "Even if we could control it, we could not have done any better."

## Cash toll could bring Mir down to earth

Charles Arthur  
Science Editor

The Mir space station may finally meet its end next year, brought down not by technical problems but the sheer cost of running it, Russia's deputy finance minister has hinted.

As the three astronauts on board the orbiting station prepared for a spacewalk tomorrow to restore power and make repairs, Vladimir Petrov, first deputy finance minister said: "The task is pressing. We must remove Mir from orbit. This will be done next year." He added, "You see, there have already been a series of breakdowns, one failure, another failure."

However, Valery Ryumio, who heads Russia's cooperation with the United States' space agency, Nasa, on Mir, said: "A bureaucrat [Petrov] can say whatever nonsense he wants. I don't even want to hear this nonsense."

Mir Petrov's comments were made to reporters on Tuesday for release last night, to coincide with a government discussion of

the 1998 budget, which will be sent to the Russian parliament by next Tuesday. That leaves the distinct possibility that the comments were part of a bargaining plan to try to reduce spending.

Exact figures on Mir's operating costs are not available, and observers say Russian military control of some aspects of the programme make it hard to calculate.

But Mir does earn valuable foreign currency: the US agreed to pay Russia \$478m (£300m), mostly for Mir-related activities, under a December 1993 agreement to last until 1998. The European Space Agency (ESA) paid \$50m for two joint missions involving Mir in 1994 and 1995.

Russian space officials have said they intend to keep Mir in orbit at least until 2000, and leading Russian policymakers have not previously advocated its retirement.

If and when it is abandoned, it will eventually fall to earth. Though most of it should burn up in the atmosphere, large pieces are expected to survive.

Mir, launched in 1986, is the last element left from the glories of the Soviet space programme, which was the first to launch a satellite and then a man into orbit.

On 25 June the station experienced the worst accident in its history when a supply ship collided with it, depressurising one of the six modules. It has suffered a series of smaller failures in recent weeks.

"In principle we are deciding three problems: to create a (new) station, support Mir until a certain time, that is until the (new) station goes into orbit, and somewhat change the space complex now in orbit," Mr Petrov said.

Russia is participating in the creation of an international space station, the first segment of which is scheduled for a June 1998 launch.

Yesterday afternoon, ground control said everything on Mir was fine: the station had regained its precise alignment with the Sun, recharged its solar batteries and switched on its main oxygen generator.

## Town defies Hun Sen

Fierce fighting continued between rival Cambodian factions last night amid conflicting reports about who controlled the remote border town of O'Smach, where forces loyal to Prince Norodom Ranariddh, the country's ousted co-premier, have been battling to prevent their final bastion falling into the hands of Cambodia's powerful leader, Hun Sen, writes Matthew Chance in Bangkok.

His well-armed and better-trained soldiers, backed by tanks and artillery, have been steadily advancing on the royalists and their Khmer Rouge allies, since staging a bloody coup d'etat last month which forced Prince Ranariddh's troops into the jungles to regroup.

At nightfall yesterday, machine gunfire and the dull thud of incoming artillery rounds and mortars rocked O'Smach, sending more refugees fleeing across the nearby border with Thailand, where they are being housed at emergency camps.

On Tuesday, Cambodia's information minister, Khieu Kanharith, claimed government forces had captured O'Smach and driven out the royalists. But actual events on the ground suggest that is not the case.

## significant shorts

### Waigel says he's tired of Germany's economy

German finance minister Theo Waigel hinted in an interview broadcast yesterday that he would quit after September 1998 federal elections at the latest. His ministry and party played down the comments, saying he had never specified the date of his resignation. But the confession that he was tired of taking the heat for Germany's economic problems was a damper for Chancellor Helmut Kohl, who is seeking re-election next year. Mr Waigel, a loyal ally, has had the post since 1989. AP - Bonn

### Sikhs request Amritsar visit

Indian Sikh leaders said that they wanted the Queen to visit Amritsar. Prakash Singh Badal, chief minister of the state of Punjab, in which Amritsar lies, said: "If the Queen visits Punjab but does not go to Amritsar, it will be a great misunderstanding." The visit has been under a cloud of controversy since Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral said he did not want Amritsar included in the visit to avoid bitterness over the 1919 massacre. Reuters - Chandigarh

### Four dead in grudge shooting

A man who apparently held a long-standing grudge against a judge killed her, two state troopers and a newspaper editor during a three-hour rampage in New Hampshire that ended when he was shot to death. The man, identified as Carl Drega, 67, was once the subject of a restraining order imposed by judge Vickie Bunnell. AP - Colebrook

### Rival for Saudi national airline

Abdul Rahman al-Jarisy, chairman of the Saudi Council of Chambers of Commerce and Industry, said he backed the creation of a private domestic airline in the kingdom. He said competition for national flag carrier Saudi Arabian Airlines could lead to "better, cheaper and more beneficial services". Reuters - Dubai

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# Dereliction of duty in the shadow of a volcano



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**A**h, the burdens of Empire. The weary Titan may have shed most of its far-flung possessions, but still come the complaints from those who are left as beneficiaries of British rule. The inhabitants of Montserrat, forced to abandon their island because of volcanic activity, have taken to the streets to accuse the British government of political inactivity.

And, of course, they are right. We retain, through a mixture of historical accident, economic circumstance and political deadlock, a number of what it calls Dependent Territories, and we are not always very good at running them. We owe the people of Montserrat a better deal.

The Montserratians, whose island is now all but uninhabitable, are dismayed with the small amount of money they are being offered to relocate. Most want to go to Britain, not to Guadeloupe or Antigua, which is what they have been offered. Those who will stay want proper emergency accommodation, not the ramshackle and poorly organised shelters they have been given so far.

These are all reasonable demands. They are demands made upon their government in Montserrat; but by extension, since Britain is the responsible power, they are

demands made upon this government, too.

The last Conservative government cannot be blamed for the eruption of volcanoes, but it can be blamed for a lot of other things. That government had a responsibility for the well-being of the people of Montserrat. Its ministers were well aware that the volcano was threatening to blow again, and they could have acted earlier to secure the lives of the islanders. This they signally failed to do. The present government is working hard to catch up, but the overall impression is that there is little time and less concern for Montserrat in Whitehall. This has upset the Montserratians, irritated the neighbouring islands, who now have to bear the burden, and angered the many people of Afro-Caribbean origin who think they smell racism.

They quite possibly do. This country was prepared to spend billions of pounds and lay down lives for the Falklanders, and a good thing too. But it is not, apparently, ready to do much more than send a ship and a few million pounds to the people of Montserrat. It has also, by the by, allowed the Falklanders to have British passports, something that is denied to all the other Dependent Territories.

Behind all this lies a much larger structural problem. We have what still amount to colonies in a post-colonial era; now that Hong Kong has gone, what do we do about those that remain? It's not only Montserrat that's unhappy. The 5,000 people of St Helena, stripped of their British passports, have been dispossessed of their history and their rights. Other colonies have also felt unloved, or maladministered. The remaining colonies represent an administrative burden for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office

which it is ill-equipped to handle, and for which our diplomats in London receive little thanks and plenty of brickbats. We must, for instance, ensure that anti-money-laundering legislation in the Caribbean dependencies is up to scratch, while fending off complaints of interference from local residents.

To misty-eyed liberals and hard-edged realists alike, the solution to this problem may seem simple: give these people the independence which they must surely crave. But it's not that simple. Montserrat doesn't

want to be independent, and couldn't survive on its own. The idea of a West Indian Federation (supposed to solve the problem of the smaller Caribbean dependencies) failed almost at its inception.

Colonial rule, in the absence of better solutions, still has its attractions. Two of the Comoros Islands in the Indian Ocean have decided they want to reverse their independence and rejoin France. The Marquesa Islands, part of French Polynesia, also want to tighten their links. They are not doing this through any great love of France, but because economically they think it makes sense. The advantages outweigh the disadvantages.

This may seem like a one-sided deal for Britain, but there is no alternative for the moment. While Montserrat remains a dependency, we have heavy moral obligations towards it. We owe the islanders an apology, and action. Britain may not have the resources, the expertise or the will to run these places, but it has, in most cases, no choice.

Both the Foreign Office and the Department for International Development have tried to move fast to help Montserrat, but the machinery seems to have been pretty inefficient. And on the broader question

of how to accommodate colonies in a post-colonial era, Whitehall is well behind the curve. There is a pressing need for Labour to develop a plan.

This Government has, so far, only one idea: it wants to call the Dependent Territories something else, on the basis that the title is patronising. Name-changing will solve nothing. We are talking about only 130,000 dependent people in these territories – but the Government declines to revise their constitutional status, or to give them full British passports. The rationale is that it would look hypocritical, when we refused to extend that privilege to the people of Hong Kong. This is a bizarre piece of Foreign Office logic: bow will it help Hong Kongers to leave St Helena in the lurch?

We need to accept that the Dependent Territories are British, and will be for the foreseeable future. We have a responsibility, not merely a hazy debt of history, but a practical, political, here-and-now responsibility, towards people who live under our flag. Montserratians should be treated with the same respect and care as our citizens living in Monmouth, or Manchester, or Metroland.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Cars: how to combat road congestion

Sir: There is a broad consensus which supports the measures advocated by Christian Wolmar ("You, your car and how to end the traffic jam", 19 August) for improving public transport, extending pedestrianisation and encouraging cycling within urban areas as in many other European countries.

One of the reasons that these have been possible in each of the examples quoted by Mr Wolmar – Groningen, Nuremberg and Zurich – is that all are surrounded by networks of high-quality roads which keep through and suburban traffic out of the central areas. In the case of Zurich, motorway links to the north, west and south reach almost to the city centre providing a further opportunity to segregate longer distance traffic that starts or ends its journey in the city.

Furthermore, in Groningen and Nuremberg there are plans for improving those road networks by widening the most heavily trafficked sections.

The Government's proposals for integrated transport are eagerly awaited. They should recognise that where these policies have been adopted successfully they have involved improving all the modes of transport. However, it is worth recording that despite the investments made in public transport, cycling and walking in Germany and the Netherlands, the national level of road traffic has grown faster in both of those countries than in the UK over the last five years. The crucial point is that, as a result of the multi-modal approach to investment being followed in both countries congestion on both urban and inter-urban routes is far less extensive than in this country. **RICHARD DIMENT**  
Director and Chief Executive  
British Road Federation  
London SE1

Sir: In your leading article (18 August) criticising the lack of a coherent national transport policy, much was made of the need to reduce car use. But no mention was made of the prospect that there will be more cars to use: this August is likely to see over 500,000 new car registrations and it is predicted that the car population will increase by over 50 per cent in the next 20 years.

Even if we use our cars 20 per cent less, a target that no transport policy has yet even aimed for, let alone achieved, the sheer number of extra cars on the road must increase traffic densities.

Part of the answer must be to restrict this increase in the number of cars: options could include restricting the manufacture or import of new cars, massively higher taxes on car purchase, or requiring the scrapping of an old car for every sale of a new one. But what government would have the courage to do any of this? **MICHAEL BRYANT**  
London SW1

Sir: Yes, British cities are 20 years behind their European counterparts in dealing with the motor car (leading article, 18 August) and much else besides. But this certainly isn't because they don't recognise that the primacy of the car cannot continue. Nor is it because of the strength of the motor lobby. Nor is it because they do not have the imagination or they do not have the competence or will to deal with the problem.



The Right Hon. Donald Dewar skating on Devolution Loch

Our problem is that we don't have genuine city government in Britain. Our cities have neither the power to raise capital nor the authority to use it to regenerate public transport or to manage the car.

**ROBERT FRITCHARD**  
City Councillor  
Leicester

Sir: The Government's willingness to consider restricting vehicular access on the most congested parts of the trunk road network to strategic traffic ("Drivers face car ban on busy M-ways", 15 August), highlights the increasing concern about the relentless rise in traffic levels.

In Edinburgh we are allocating road space away from private cars, which have an average occupancy of 1.2, and giving it to modes of transport which use space more efficiently. This month saw the implementation of the first Greenways – intensive bus priority and traffic management measures on radial roads.

Restricting access to motorways could simply divert traffic on to already congested local roads. To avoid this the Government is right to be considering direct charging for road use. **DAVID BEGG**  
Convener of Transport  
Edinburgh

Sir: I welcome plans to reduce car traffic, but we must be careful that we do not create an elitist society where only the very rich have cars.

A lower-income family with several children is more in need of a car than a high-earning business person who drives in to London every day rather than using the train, but it is these families who

will be targeted by policies which tax car ownership and use.

Far more effective would be the taxing of businesses per employee who drives to work, and encouraging those businesses to offer incentives to employees who switch to public transport. Another huge reduction in car traffic would be gained by more incentives for people to work from home using computer, modem and fax. **BEATRICE PURSER**  
Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire

Sir: Your photograph ("You, your car and how to end the traffic jam", 19 August) of a young man cycling along a deserted path in Regent's Park eloquently demonstrates why more people do not cycle to work in London – what he is doing is illegal. **ANDREW BARR**  
London NW6

### Counselling can be effective

Sir: Your account ("Counselling loses face in NHS review", 18 August) of the NHS Centre for Reviews and Dissemination Report concentrated on its concerns about the limited usefulness of counselling. Yet the report as a whole contains much evidence for the efficacy of psychological approaches in working with such varied client groups as newly unemployed people, bereaved children and pregnant women.

The moral is that counselling

should not be regarded as a panacea but as one form of psychological treatment among many. It needs to be offered in the context of a complete range of psychological treatments offered by mental health professionals such as chartered psychologists so that people can be sure they will only receive counselling in situations where it has been shown to be effective. This approach also has the advantage of making it more likely that clients will receive the social support that is often vital to the success of treatment programmes. Many NHS departments of clinical psychology, including my own, employ counsellors as part of the treatment team.

The worrying case history that accompanies your account emphasises the folly of allowing people to set themselves up as "counsellors" or "psychologists" with no legal safeguards for the public. Representatives of the British Psychological Society are to meet Paul Boateng, the junior health minister, to urge him to bring in statutory control for the profession. Such control, which already exists for doctors, dentists and pharmacists, would do much to protect the public against unscrupulous or incompetent practitioners.

**ADRIAN SKINNER**  
Chartered Clinical Psychologist  
Harrogate Health Care  
NHS Trust

The writer is Vice-Chair, Division of Clinical Psychology, British Psychological Society

### Take the profit out of drugs

Sir: I entirely agree with Jack Girling's suggestion (19 August) that there should be a blanket legislation of hallucinatory drugs.

As an insurance loss adjuster, I have seen burglary claims multiply over the past six or seven years in what seems to be direct correlation with reported increases in drug abuse. The public is suffering as a result of spin-off crimes such as these. The message is simple. Supply hard drugs at cost price to whoever wants them and take all the profit out of the industry. This not only cuts out the gang warfare associated with this seedy business but also eradicates the need for users to make £100 or more per day out of petty crime in order to feed their habits.

Having said this, the idea of dispensing these drugs through GPs and chemists is misguided. There is already a system of drug prescription for existing addicts through these outlets. What the system does not cater for is the person taking drugs for the first time. No doctor worth his or her salt is ever going to give a "rubber stamp" prescription to a non-addict who just wants to have a go. Mr Girling fails to recognise that this will create a new, albeit smaller, market for the embryonic user, who will not be able to obtain repeat doses in the same way a hardened addict could and does. The drug barons would still be in business, but this time more

viciously in pursuit of a shrinking "client" base.

Consequently, whilst the "corner shop" supplier is not the answer, a relaxed system, such as that used by the needle exchange, would be ideal. It's got to be all or nothing. Part legalisation will create its own, perhaps worse, problems. **MICHAEL P WARD**  
Chartered Insurance Practitioner  
Stockport, Cheshire

### Smeared by devolution

Sir: What will devolution do (Letters, 20 August)? It will make government more open, more accountable, and more ready to listen to ordinary people. It is part of a process of reform long overdue in our political culture. We live in a state which is one of the most centralised and secretive in the world. The "No" campaign has relied on innuendo and fear to bolster its case. It is completely within character that it refused to reveal the amount donated by the nonagenarian tax exile, Sir Julian Hodge ("Welsh rivals squabble over campaign cash", 19 August). Over the next month the same tired smears about "cost" and "break up of the UK" will be trotted out.

The real issues, however, are about openness and accountability in government. In 1990, after the fall of the Communist regime, Václav Havel proclaimed to the Czech people "your government has returned to you"; on 18 September the people of Wales have the opportunity to make that happen here. **PHILIP DIXON**  
Pontypridd, Mid Glamorgan

### Bright future of 'Britannia'

Sir: In the early Fifties the future for Britain looked bright. It could hardly be otherwise, considering the terrible previous decade. There was a purposeful advance in commerce and industry and of course shipbuilding. In particular the building of *Britannia* on the Clyde was a fine example of British maritime excellence. She was new, state-of-the-art and filled with purpose – a symbol of a bright future for her country and a new, young monarch.

But what now? The future, the confidence, the uncertainty all muddled and clouded. What good could come out of her now? What symbolic gesture could she make? Will she be scrapped? Will she be added to all the other attractions at Greenwich or Portsmouth?

Or could *Britannia* be responsible for the creation of 600 jobs, the resurrection and security of a listed dry-dock, the regeneration of a run-down and depressed area, the creation of a Maritime Heritage Centre and a magnificent return to the Clyde, where she was built, to be one of Britain's finest examples of symbolic maritime engineering to be maintained in perpetuity for the benefit of future generations? I think so. **PETER MINSHALL**  
Glasgow

### Stranded in Stranraer

Sir: The fact that Paul Valéry's substitute coach service from Dumfries arrived at Stranraer half an hour before his (just) missed rail connection from Carlisle ("A Journey around the Whole Island of Great Britain", 15 August) is a sad reminder of one of the less than far-sighted acts of the Beeching era.

The 54-mile long direct rail link between Dumfries and Stranraer via Castle Douglas and Newton Stewart (the so-called "Port Road") was closed in June 1965, and, as Paul Valéry intimated, rail travellers from the south have to follow a 135-mile long diversion through Kilmarnock and Ayr. **TONY ROSS**  
Cottingham, East Yorkshire

### History of stars and stripes

Sir: Trevor Phillips ("The Union Flag has had its day in the sun", 16 August) claims the Union Flag is junior to Old Glory. True, the first American flag (1777) appeared 24 years before the current Union Flag (1801). However, that is not to compare like with like.

The first version of the Union Flag appeared in 1606, the cross of St Patrick being added in 1801. The first version of the American flag displayed just 13 stars in the canton, probably in a circle. As more states joined, the number of stripes and stars increased. In 1818 the flag reverted to 13 stripes. The current version dates from 1960, when Hawaii became the 50th state.

**GRAEME THORLEY**  
Harrow, Middlesex

Sir: If Trevor Phillips wants to design and fly his own flag in the garden – like a lot of Americans – let him get on with it. As for myself, the flag is distinctive and colourful; quite nice really. **MARGARET BARNES**  
Conwy, Gwynedd



## analysis

## Freed from their silly headgear



Whingeing Poms and upbeat Australians? If anything, it's the reverse these days. Old images are being replaced by new realities, says Robert Milliken

sive venture of its type with any country. By the end of this year, there will have been 180 projects designed to bring together scientists, students, artists, writers, teachers and actors from both countries.

For example, a party of Welsh teachers has just toured the outback talking to Aborigines about common problems in preserving native languages. Both groups will join an Internet programme that already links about 100 British and Australian schools. A big exhibition of modern British art will open in Sydney next week, coinciding with the publication of a book that looks at the way British and Australian writers have described each other's country over two centuries.

What lies behind all this is a realisation in both London and Canberra that an old relationship long infected by prejudices has been undergoing an interesting metamorphosis. The governments of the two countries have had very little to do with it - they have largely turned their backs on each other in recent decades, as they pursued new regional identities in Europe or Asia. But Britain and Australia can be useful to each other again. The forces driving this idea are a cultural revolution, a new commercial dynamism, the Blair government and Australia's drift towards republicanism.

When the British Council arrived in Sydney in 1947, Australia was white, Anglo-Celtic and stuffily conformist. "We are a British community in the South Seas," said John Curtin, Australia's wartime prime minister. "We regard ourselves as the trustees of the British way of life in a part of the world where it is of the utmost significance..."

Boatloads of Australia's best creative minds heading for Britain passed boatloads of "£10 Pom" immigrants going the other way. Any young film maker who wanted to make a film about his own country had to go to London. The Ealing studios, in particular, made a series of "Australian" films during the Fifties, invariably set in the outback and starring the rugged Chips Rafferty, the Paul Hogan of his day. At their most extreme, British images of Australia tended to reflect those of writers such as Ian Morris, who reminded her readers in 1962 that Australia "was founded by the scum of England, only six generations ago". In the Seventies, the writings of Australian expatriates such as Germaine Greer, Clive James and Barry Humphries, aided and abetted by the British media, helped to reinforce these old stereotypes.

But in the Nineties, the one-way cultural sea lane has been replaced by a superhighway of curious young things travelling

in both directions. To the twentysomethings of multicultural Australia, Curtin's words seem like those from another planet. The cultural cringe - the old notion that nothing Australian was any good until it had succeeded in the northern hemisphere - has been replaced by an almost myopic cultural nationalism.

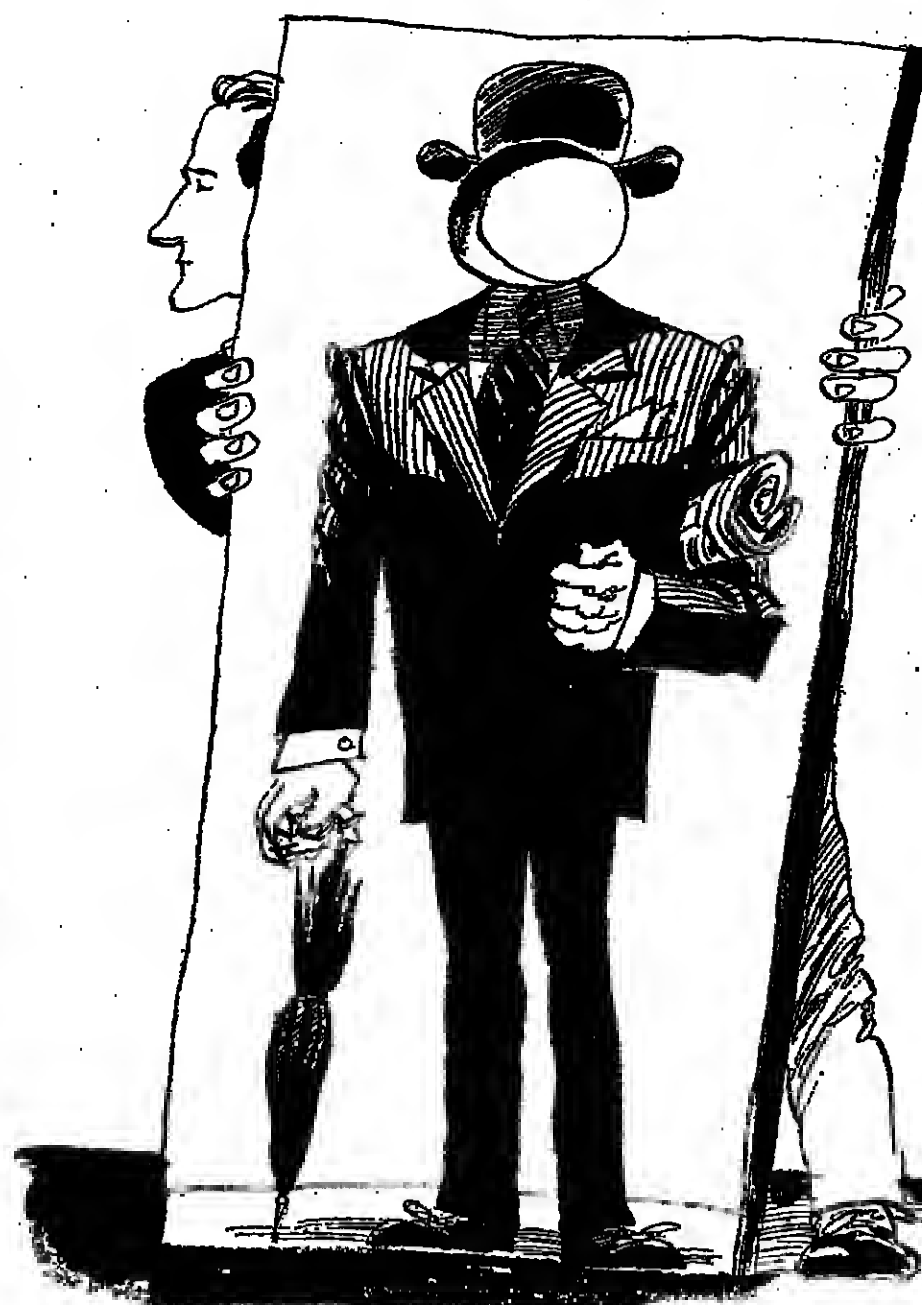
Films such as *Strictly Ballroom* and *William Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet*, both made by the Australian director Baz Luhrmann, not to mention Grundy Television's *Neighbours* phenomenon, have helped redefine a modern cultural image of Australia. Though it may not suit an older generation, young people in Britain and Australia see the cultural relationship now as one of equality; so much so that the University of Wales announced last week that it was starting Britain's first degree course in Australian studies. It will focus on Australian culture, history, society and literature - aspects of the country that many British writers refused, until quite recently, to take seriously. Or, as Les Murray, the Australian poet who won the TS Eliot Prize this year, put it in his book, *Subhuman Rhythms*: "A short history gets you imperial scorn/maintained by backs after the empire is gone."

This cultural sea change has been matched to trade and investment. British investment in Australia trebled in the decade to 1995. Britain is the second biggest investor in Australia after the United States, and the biggest investor in Australian manufacturing. Few people realise that, concomitantly, Australia is the fifth biggest investor in Britain, just after France and Germany and well ahead of Japan and South Korea. By 1994, 33 British firms had set up regional bases in Australia for trade into Asia and the Pacific. In the last three years this figure has exploded to 130 British companies.

Even before he became prime minister, Tony Blair took an interest in this British-Australian economic and cultural renaissance. His election means that both countries are likely to pursue their revived relationship more vigorously.

Mr Blair is the sort of British political leader Australians can understand. He is young, forward-looking and committed to constitutional change. He hears none of the aloof stereotypes of many former British leaders. Over the past two years there has been an unprecedented exchange of policy ideas between the British Labour and the Australian Labor parties.

When Mr Blair met Paul



Keating, his former Australian counterpart, as a guest of Rupert Murdoch on an island off the Queensland coast two years ago, he took back to Britain a blueprint of how Australian Labor had transformed itself into a modern political force that won four elections in a row. Now that Labor is back in opposition down under, Kim Beazley, its new leader and a contemporary of Mr Blair's at Oxford, is performing a similar exercise. Mr Blair and Mr Beazley recently had four hours of talks. Mr Beazley was keen to hear how New Labour went much further than its Australian counterpart ever dared to in distancing itself from unions, particularly by privatising its funding arrangements. Australia's moves towards becoming a republic can only enhance this new relationship. The British monarch as Australia's head of state is the last and greatest symbol of the colonial era in the country's constitutional arrangements. As long as this increasingly bizarre arrangement remains, it will be a source of prickliness among Australians and diffidence among Britons in their official dealings with each other. Mr Blair would welcome Australia becoming a republic because it

would put both countries on a truly equal footing constitutionally, as they have become in all other respects.

Oddly enough, all this momentum towards modern image-building is taking off at a time when Australia is led by a prime minister, John Howard, who is firmly wedded to old images. Mr Howard, leader of the conservative Liberal Party, is a Fifties man, a monarchist and an admirer of the old British Australia, when the relationship was more lopsided than it has become. He is uncomfortable with Australia's new Asian identity, and with what he sees as a politically correct revisionist view of Australian history that highlights former racist immigration policies and injustices to Aborigines from the era of Anglo-Celtic ascendancy.

To Mr Howard, this is an uncalculated "black armband" view of history or - as he put it recently - "a belief that most Australian history since 1788 has been little more than a disgraceful story of imperialism, exploitation, racism, sexism and other forms of discrimination". Notwithstanding opinion polls that show that more than half of all Australians want to be

done with the monarchy, Mr Howard has done his best to shut down the republican debate.

So old images may prove harder to shake off, however much the modern reality may have changed. Others have simply been transformed out of sight. The prosperous, upbeat mood of Mr Blair's Britain means you don't hear much about the "whingeing Poms" these days. The species, some would argue, has transmogrified into the "whingeing Australian". Political debate in Mr Howard's Australia has become a carping affair. Despite low inflation, low interest rates, economic growth, sunshine, space, excellent food and high quality wine, most Australians feel they have never had it so good, according to a market research poll published the other day.

Even film star Mel Gibson's father got in on the act. Speaking from his multimillionaire son's farm in southern New South Wales, 79-year-old Hulton Gibson said Australia was a "paradise" when he moved his family there from America in 1968. "Now it's gone to economic rack and ruin." That sounds more like a sound-bite from Britain 20 years ago.

The first time I ever visited Britain, a "visit" that was to last several years as it turned out, some relatives I was meeting in their home kindly offered me a glass of beer. I did not particularly want it, but they insisted. "Go on, we got it in especially," they said. "That's what you drink in Australia, isn't it?"

Later a British colleague had an equivalent experience when she visited Australia to write a book about the country. The reaction was suspicious, even hostile: "We don't want any more Poms coming here, telling us what they think."

Both images were classic stereotypes of the way the British and Australians have long viewed each other: the Australian male incapable of appreciating any social beverage other than beer, and the lofty Pom coming out to lord it over the locals. Few countries have had such close links over the past 200 years, yet have simultaneously been driven apart by crudely caricatured images of the other. This year, both countries have jointly embarked on an initiative to start afresh - a campaign called New Images that seeks to modernise the perceptions of Britain in Australia, and vice versa.

The campaign is a tie-in with the 50th anniversary of the opening of the British Council's office in Sydney. Cultural overhaul is its most visible aspect, but it goes far beyond tossing out the tired old clichés of hats with dangling cords and slobering Sir Les Paltersoo in Britain, and of lost empire and warm beer in Australia (the latter were among the two most enduring impressions of Britain that emerged in a survey conducted earlier this year by the British High Commission in Canberra).

Britain is pouring about £3m into its New Images campaign with Australia, the most inten-

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## Exclusive: secrets of the Major years

I have never been involved in ghost-writing a major political autobiography before, so my recent stint devoted to helping John Major to write *The Major Years* has introduced me to several problems new to me. One of them was trying to get Mr Major to remember anything at all about his years in office.

"Perhaps we could turn to the night that Britain left the ERM," I said one day, "the night remembered by so many as Black Thursday."

"I don't remember much about that," said Mr Major. "What I do remember is that Norman was in charge. He made a complete mess of it. He had to go. I told him to go. If that is not responsible and direct action I don't know what is. I am sure Norman tells a very different story. All I can say is, take everything he says with a pinch of salt."

"Mr Major," I said, "I shall not be talking to Mr Lamont. I am not writing an article. I am doing your book. I am writing down your words."

"Ah!" said Mr Major. "My words, eh? So I can say what I like about Norman?"

"Oh, yes."

"So I can tell the truth?" I was about to remark that saying what you like is not always the same as telling the truth, when he carried straight on:

"In that case, I can remember exactly what happened on the night of Black Thursday."

He then told me a version which I could not possibly print. The way he told the story reminded me of the rumour that Mr Major had a fine sense of humour which he showed only in private, and I later asked him if he had deliberately decided to present a humdrum face as Prime Minister.

"Oh, yes," he said. "Part of Margaret Thatcher's secret of success was her total lack of humour. She didn't know when she was being ridiculous, so she was not scared of it. I thought I could emulate that on purpose."

"I always thought she must have a secret sense of humour," I said. "Only a person with a gift for comedy could declare war to get an island like the Falklands back, then proceed to give a place like Hong Kong away."

Mr Major looked grave.



Miles Kingston

"Extraordinary, isn't it, how that woman is still remembered for?" I wonder what my period of office will be remembered for?

I could not help noticing that when Mr Major referred to his own time at No 10, it was always as his "period of office", but when it came to Margaret Thatcher it was her "stint" or "tenure", or even "reign". Perhaps it was his sense of humour.

"Black Thursday?" I suggested. "Mad cow disease? The Scott report?"

His face lightened and all traces of humour vanished.

"It may not be within the gift of politicians to choose what to be remembered for," he snapped, "but at least they may be allowed to nominate other things than unfortunate accidents. Is there anything disastrous that happened that can really be blamed on me, and not on Douglas Hogg?"

"Yes," I said. "The continued presence at the Home Office of Michael Howard, possibly the most dislikeable man in British politics. You appointed him. You stood by while he ranted about prisons, and was condemned by British judges, and sacked people instead of taking responsibility for anything, and looked so smug..."

I paused, suddenly aware that I might have overstepped the privileges of a ghost-writer. But to my surprise, he was smiling.

"My dear fellow," he said. "You must always have someone like Michael Howard in your cabinet, someone outstandingly smug and easy to hate, so that everyone else can see the flask directed towards him and away from them. Oh, no, he was invaluable."

"At last, something interesting to put in our book!" I said.

"You can't put that in," said Mr Major. "In any case, I want to avoid personalities and concentrate on our very real achievements in office."

"You may wish to do that," I said, "but nobody will wish to buy such a book."

He threw me a baleful glance and turned on the TV news, a thing he still did out of habit every few hours to see what was being said about him. There was only yet more coverage of our departure from Hong Kong, with pictures of Chris Patten talking and smiling. With an unexpected oath, John Major turned it off again.

"That man!" he said.

He had nothing against Patten personally. It was just the deeply felt humiliation of leaving No 10 to a chorus of silence, at a time when cheers, hurrahs and media attention were going to the man leaving Hong Kong. This, I fear, will also not be mentioned in our book.

*'The Major Years' will be published early in 1998 and remaindered soon afterwards.*







# business & city

FINANCIAL JOURNAL  
OF THE YEAR

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## Regulator backs down on electricity price cuts

Chris Godsmark  
Business Correspondent

The fall in electricity bills next year looks set to be much smaller than previously predicted, after the industry regulator yesterday softened his price control proposals in the face of intense criticism from electricity companies.

Professor Stephen Littlechild said domestic charges could drop by between £15 and £25 over the two years from next April, a fall of 7.5-10 per cent on an average £270 bill excluding VAT. The new proposals compared with a forecast cut of 12 per cent in his previous consultation paper last month, worth £32 off bills in just one year and more over two years.

The climbdown followed claims by the regional electricity companies (RECs) that the price controls would plunge their supply businesses into the red, discouraging new entrants into the market when domestic competition is introduced from April 1998. Some RECs had threatened to take the dispute

to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, a move which could have delayed competition.

Professor Littlechild said he had accepted the RECs' claim that introducing competition would mean higher administrative costs, with the likelihood of a much larger volume of customer queries. But he launched a defence of the competition experiment, insisting it would mean bigger savings in the long term. "You can't deliver by price restraint what you can deliver from competition," he said.

He claimed the new plans had probably averted the possibility of an MMC referral by the companies. "I don't think there's a justifiable basis for a company to go to the MMC, if it did, we've got a good case."

The price proposals related to the RECs' supply businesses, including administrative and billing systems, which account for about 7 per cent of domestic bills. The RECs' distribution divisions, responsible for 30 per cent of bills and most of their profits, are already subject to tough price cuts.

Professor Littlechild denied he had softened the price cuts after intervention from John Battle, the Industry Minister. In an unusual step, the Electricity Association had written to complain directly to Mr Battle, who has put himself in overall charge of delivering competition. "I haven't had any ministerial pressure brought to bear," said Professor Littlechild.

The power watchdog, Ofgas, gave other significant concessions to the RECs on the cost of introducing competition. The proposals raised the estimate of the costs which the industry could pass through to customer bills, from £363m over five years to £500m. However, the figure remained well below the £850m suggested by the companies.

The cost of competition, which covers the introduction of complex new computer systems to track customers as they switch supplier, will now be £2.60 a year for each household, or 1 per cent of bills, a figure included in the overall estimate for bills. Ofgas's original projection was for customers to

pay just £1 towards the cost.

Consumer groups gave the proposals a cautious welcome, despite the prospect of smaller cuts in charges. Ken Prior, from the Electricity Consumers' Committee, said: "It's a pragmatic solution. On this basis competition will happen."

The biggest change in the fifth consultation document yesterday was in Ofgas's projections for generation costs, which account for almost 60 per cent of bills and are not price regulated.

The plans suggest a drop of 6-10 per cent in generating costs next year, largely because high price coal contracts expire from April. The previous proposals envisaged reductions of up to 12 per cent, with big cuts in the profit margin earned by the generators over the price in the wholesale power market, the Electricity Pool.

Shares in the generating companies soared on the concessions, which have effectively removed the threat of backdoor price regulation. National Power shares rose 23p to 516.5p, while PowerGen gained 35p to 761.5p.

Other electricity company shares also rose, with Southern Electric, the last remaining independently quoted REC, adding 7p to 461p and Scottish Power rising 11p to 431.5p.

Simon Flowers, head of utility research at NatWest Securities, said: "The reductions in consumer bills will now largely come from the reductions in the coal contracts which were going to happen anyway next year, rather than the regulator forcing down contract prices between the generators and the RECs."

The latest proposals have added to the gloom for RJB Mining, the company which bought most British Coal pits at privatisation and this week announced the closure of the UK's newest mine.



In the teeth of the City: A lone construction worker makes his way up the concrete and steel emergency stairwell of the new UK headquarters for the Dutch bank ABN-Amro in Spitalfields, London. Photograph: Greg Bos/Reuters

## Rentokil fulfils growth pledge

Sameena Ahmad

Rentokil Initial, the pest control to plant hire group, yesterday just managed to meet its goal of 20 per cent annual earnings growth, after a £14m hit from the strong pound.

Speaking at the group's half-year results, Sir Clive Thompson, chief executive of Rentokil, admitted that without BET, the business services giant bought for £2.1bn last year, the company would have struggled to reach its growth target.

"Nothing grows at 20 per cent forever. If the company had remained as it was, it would have slowed. But that's not earth-shattering. Every business needs to change to grow," he said.

Earnings per share rose 20 per cent to 89p in the six months to June, the first set of figures to include a full contribution from BET.

Sir Clive said that the group was poised to sell peripheral BET and Rentokil businesses, including timber preserving and industrial production. However, he dismissed criticisms that keeping BET's plant hire businesses exposed the company to cyclical markets. "Our view is that if we can add value to these businesses, run them better and generate cash, we will keep them."

Analysts said Sir Clive's earnings target had become a noose around the company's neck, and predicted earnings growth would slow to around 16 per cent over the next few years.

Andrew Ripper at Merrill Lynch said the City was frustrated at the lack of transparency in the group's figures, which included a full six months' contribution from BET, against two months last time.

"It is very difficult to make sense of the divisional split," he added.

Investment column, page 18

Company	Generating costs	Non-generating costs	Total
Eastern	-9.6%	-0.5%	-6.3%
East Midlands	-7.7%	-1.5%	-5.3%
London	-7.9%	-0.8%	-4.8%
Manweb	-7.8%	-1.3%	-4.9%
Midlands	-8.5%	-1.7%	-5.9%
Northern	-8.3%	-1.3%	-5.3%
Norweb	-8.0%	-2.4%	-5.8%
Seaboard	-6.8%	-0.5%	-4.2%
Southern	-8.4%	-0.8%	-5.3%
Swalec	-8.2%	-2.8%	-5.5%
South Western	-7.5%	-2.3%	-5.2%
Yorkshire	-7.2%	-0.3%	-4.5%
ScottishPower	-7.2%	+3.8%	-2.7%
Hydro-Electric	-9.4%	-1.8%	-3.3%
Average England & Wales	-8.0%	-1.4%	-5.3%
Average Scottish	-8.3%	+5.4%	-3.0%
Average GB	-8.0%	-0.2%	-4.8%

\*Based on an average 8 per cent reduction in generating costs

## High street boom renews rate fears

Tom Stevenson  
Financial Editor

High street sales are growing faster than at any time since the economic boom of the late 1980s, official figures showed yesterday. An unexpectedly large jump in retail sales growth stoked fears that interest rates might have to rise again, but economists cautioned that the figures were nothing like as alarming as they appeared at first sight.

According to the Office of National Statistics, retail sales growth hit 6.5 per cent last month, up from 5.6 per cent in June and higher than expectations in the City of around 5.9 per cent.

The surge in spending was driven by building society windfalls, which sent sales of household goods to a record high, but

there was evidence that the conversion boom peaked in June and was falling away quite rapidly.

Sales of household goods, which include big ticket items such as domestic and electrical appliances, rose 7.4 per cent in the three months to July, compared to the previous quarter, the highest growth since 1986. On an annualised basis, sales were 15.8 per cent higher, indicating the extent to which windfalls have found their way into the high street.

But Geoffrey Robinson, the Paymaster General, played down fears that inflationary pressures were building in the economy. He said strong retail sales were no surprise and competition on the high street was keeping prices down.

He added: "It was entirely expected. We know there is a lot

of windfall money being paid out, so we budgeted for this and the market was also expecting it."

People were also saving some of their windfalls, Mr Robinson continued. "At present, people are having a good time, they're enjoying themselves, they're also saving a lot of it so the situation is that for the moment it's as we expected it and we will review it as the situation develops."

He was speaking after figures from the Building Societies Association showed savers had deposited a record amount of cash into societies.

The association said the influx of £1.85bn was due to car-park seekers seeking a conversion windfall, combined with investors looking for a good interest rate.

The sales figures came a day

after an economist warned that the economy was in danger of repeating the boom-bust cycle of the late 1980s as a European Commission survey showed consumer confidence was back at the record levels of 1987.

Ben Sanderson, of Nottingham Trent University, said: "Consumers are showing uncanny parallels with their behaviour during the Lawson boom."

City economists were divided on whether the figures meant interest rate rises were more likely. David Bloom, at HSBC James Capel, said: "It is impossible to believe the Bank will be comfortable with annual retail sales running at 6.5 per cent, the highest level since July 1988 and the highest in the world at present."

He said this month's lower-than-expected 0.3 per cent rise

was not a sign of a slowdown but an indication that the economy was falling off before enjoying another surge. "If this month's rise is such a soft patch, one quakes in anticipation when sales actually restart their powerful monthly trend."

Simon Briscoe, of Nikko Europe, said this backed up last week's Bank of England warning that there was an "upside risk that larger-than-expected proportion of the payouts will be spent during the year".

Andrew Cates, of UBS, was more sanguine: "The fact that windfall spending seems to have moderated may provide some comfort to the members of the Bank's monetary committee."

But he said the growth in the money supply - which yesterday came in at 11.8 per cent, above City forecasts - was "worryingly high".

## Surge in windfall spending to become a trickle by autumn

Tom Stevenson  
Financial Editor

Windfall spending is running out of steam fast, according to official figures released yesterday. Shares from the converting building societies have swelled shoppers' wallets over the past six months but the rate of windfall-related spending halved last month, an estimate from the Office of National Statistics showed.

Economists said a reduction in windfall spending in July to £100m from June's £200m showed the consumer boom was flagging as quickly as it blew up in the first half of the year.

They believe further cash may trickle into the shops through the autumn, but say the apparent need to jack up interest rates to dampen demand is now less urgent.

Clive Vaughan, at the retail consultant Verdict, said: "The surge that came through, particularly in June, does seem to be a bit calmer now. But we could still see some windfall spending filtering through until the beginning of next year."

The latest retail sales data showed growth up 0.3 per cent in July after a 0.8 per cent rise in May and a 1.2 per cent increase in May.

Analysis attributed the surge in retail sales in May and June to higher spending financed by windfall cash, which mostly went on large household items.

A survey of households conducted by consumer research group Mintel and investment bank Robert Fleming and pub-

lished this week concluded that less than 25 per cent of the windfall cash had been, would be, spent with nearly 77 per cent saved or used to repay debt. That would amount to £8.2bn of extra spending power this year.

Peter Warburton, economic adviser at Robert Fleming Securities, said the latest figures chimed with his firm's survey, which was published earlier in the week. The surge in consumer confidence, which has occurred during the past six months as these windfall payments have been eagerly awaited, is likely to be reversed quite rapidly this autumn.

Mr Vaughan said there was little evidence the large payouts had permanently affected consumers' spending habits.

## Cockburn walks out early

Nigel Cope  
City Correspondent

Bill Cockburn, the WH Smith chief executive whose shock decision to quit the retail giant was announced in June, has already left the business. Mr Cockburn was supposed to remain at the company until October, when he joins BT as head of its domestic operations. But Mr Cockburn left at the beginning of August. He was entitled to a full month of holiday but will not return during September.

Insiders say the absence of a chief executive, even one who was about to leave, has left the

company without strategic direction. It has left the four internal candidates for Mr Cockburn's post jockeying for position as factions form behind each of them.

Jeremy Hardie, WH Smith's chairman, has been running the company. The search for a new chief executive has been led by the nominations committee, which consists of three of the group's non-executive directors - Martin Taylor, chief executive of Barclays Bank, Marjorie Scardino, chief executive of Pearson, and Patrick Lupo, an American who is chairman of DELL Worldwide.

The company will not make an announcement about Mr Cockburn's replacement at its full-year results meeting next Wednesday. However, it is thought the successful candidate will be named next month.

Insiders are expecting an internal appointment. They say Alan Giles, head of the Waterstones books business, has emerged as a late front runner ahead of finance director Keith Hamill. The other internal candidates are Richard Handover, who runs WH Smith's news distribution business, and John Hancock, head of the group's American operations.

## Casino chief stays quiet on writ

Nigel Cope

Kenneth Thompson, the former acting chief executive of casinos operator Capital Corporation, who is being sued by the company for "conspiracy to injure" the group, has been advised by his lawyers not to hold a press conference this week to present further details of his case.

Mr Thompson's legal representatives declined to comment further on the writ, which was issued against Mr Thompson and two other former employees on Tuesday beyond saying they would "resist the charges vigorously".

Capital Corporation said Mr Thompson and the other two employees cited in the writ would be making a "serious mistake" if they made any further allegations. Mr Thompson, Des Pereira, the former company secretary, and Guy Hutchinson, the former head of purchasing for the food and beverage operations, are accused in the writ of bringing the company into disrepute and spreading damaging allegations about the business to the press.

The three men have seven days to receive the posted writ and a further 14 to acknowledge it. Capital Corporation can

then file a detailed statement of claim. Mr Pereira, Mr Thompson and Mr Hutchinson then have 14 days to offer their defence, though it is likely their lawyers will ask for more time.

It is understood Mr Thompson has already incurred substantial legal fees relating to his time as a director of the company. Capital is seeking damages, the return of all confidential information and an injunction preventing further disclosures. It claims that "the selective use" of papers in the press has created "a false and misleading" impression as to the true value of the business.

## Thailand seeks extra \$3bn to stave off crisis

Tom Stevenson  
Financial Editor

The Bank for International Settlements, lender to the world's central banks, was last night expected to add its weight to the international attempt to shore up Thailand's crisis-torn economy. The BIS was understood to have agreed a further \$3.3bn loan to add to the \$16.7bn already put up by a range of Asian countries led by Japan.

Officials from the Bank declined to comment on statements from the Thai government that it would be calling for the extra loan. The extra assistance, which would be used to bolster foreign reserves and help cover a balance of payments shortfall, would bring in funds from the US Federal Reserve and European central banks.

That would widen the geographic spread of assistance for Thailand, which has so far included contributions from countries in the Asia-Pacific region as well as the International Monetary Fund, World Bank and Asian Development Bank. The IMF was meeting yesterday in Washington to approve its own \$4bn contribution. The package is designed to bail out Thailand, which was

forced to devalue its currency after persistent attacks by speculators in the foreign exchange markets.

Several South-east Asian currencies have fallen victim to speculation in recent months, with the Hong Kong dollar peg to the US dollar coming under fire most recently.

The BIS is a global centre for co-operation among central bankers and provides a wide array of financial services to these banks. This includes short-term bridge financing in the event that a country is facing a liquidity crunch.

In 1995 the BIS arranged for a \$10bn short-term facility for Mexico as part of an international package that included \$20bn from the United States and \$17.8bn from the IMF.

Bankers said Thailand's recourse to the BIS was an indication it may have difficulty keeping its international reserves above a \$23bn level prescribed by the IMF. Those worries kept downward pressure on the baht, which has lost more than 20 per cent of its value since it was floated on 2 July. Thailand has foreign debt of nearly \$89bn, around half of which is held by Japanese banks.

Index	Close	Day's change	Change (%)	1996/97 High	1996/97 Low	Yield (%)
FTSE 100	4814.20	+79.20	+1.6	5086.90	4056.80	3.36
FTSE 250	4680.80	+16.80	+0.4	4729.40	4386.20	3.55
FTSE 350	2373.10	+32.50	+1.4	2438.00	2017.90	3.40
FTSE SmallCap	2230.74	+11.11	+0.5	2374.20	2178.29	3.21
FTSE All-Share	2317.83	+30.43	+1.3	2376.39	1989.78	3.39
New York	7916.10	+114.74	+1.5	8259.31	5032.94	1.89
Tokyo	18961.00	-96.10	-0.4	20681.07	17303.85	0.811
Hong Kong	15477.26	-519.82	-3.3	16673.27	12055.17	2.791
Frankfurt	4169.62	+61.02	+2.2	4438.83	2848.77	1.361

Source: FT Information

Index	1 Month	3 Month	6 Month	1 Year	2 Year	3 Year	5 Year	10 Year	30 Year
UK	7.12	7.50	7.01	7.77	7.07	7.80			
US	5.53	5.87	6.20	6.55	6.51	6.80			
Japan	0.56	0.66	2.07	3.11					
Germany	3.12	3.56	5.60	6.26	6.22				

Index	Yesterday	Change	Year Ago	Index	Yesterday	Change	Year Ago
\$ (London)	1.8082	-0.075	1.5488	£ (London)	0.6228	+0.16	0.6489
¥ (Tokyo)	1.8050	+0.106	1.5468	¥ (Tokyo)	0.6281	-0.03	0.6481
DM (London)	2.9496	+1.408	2.3124	DM (London)	1.8364	+1.410	1.4935
¥ (London)	1.8945	+1.016	1.6704	¥ (London)	118.195	+10.455	167.880
£ (London)	1.025	-0.03	85.0	£ (London)	105.1	+0.5	95.3

Source: Reuters

1250 من الراجل



## Customers pay cost of electricity competition



COMMENT

**'If the incumbent supplier remains untouched by competition, the consumer will suffer over the longer term. It's worth paying a short-term price for the introduction of competition, is basically the argument'**

Professor Stephen Littlechild, the electricity regulator, has become a master of the U-turn. In his first review of electricity distribution charges three years ago, he got it so hopelessly wrong that he was forced into a complete re-review. Even then he failed fully to appreciate the scope regional electricity companies have for cash generation and was much kinder in them than he might have been.

Perhaps stung by this experience, the Prof this time went too far in the other direction and is now being forced to backtrack on the price restraints in the competitive supply market from April 1998. He'd hoped these new curbs would help cut bills by £30 next year. After screams of protest from the RECs, he's settled for a more modest £15 to £25, depending on where you live.

The main justification for this climb-down seems to be that Professor Littlechild underestimated the costs of introducing competition. Quite a paradox, this, since if competition carries a cost to consumers, you have to wonder what its purpose is. All the same there is something in the argument that if price controls are too onerous, they will act as a deterrent to newcomers. If the incumbent supplier remains untouched by competition, the consumer will suffer over the longer term. It's worth paying a short-term price for the introduction of competition, is basically the argument.

The only problem is that the part of an electricity bill being opened to competition

is actually only 7 per cent of the total. Most of the cuts in bills next year were going to happen anyway because of new, cheaper coal contracts and the Prof's existing distribution price controls. In fact bills would have gone down further in the short term but for the introduction of competition.

The electricity regulator has also abandoned his attempt to introduce price controls on the generators via the back door - one of the elements that made up the more ambitious £30 cut in bills he originally proposed. His first set of proposals attempted to curb the premium generators can charge over the pool price. That's now gone.

So who's got the better end of the deal - the consumer or the shareholder? This is one of those cases where we will all have to just wait and see. The Prof may be right that competition will eventually bring significant benefits but it does take something of a leap of faith. So far the newcomers have hardly been battering the doors down in the scramble to enter the market. Only Centrica has so far declared a serious interest. The real test is whether the BPs, Tescos and Sainsburys are going to join the fray.

### BG's howls of protest were over nothing

Could British Gas really be so brazen as to announce a £1bn to £2bn share buy-back with its interim results next month? Af-

ter all the carping about how the regulator's new price controls were going to destroy the company, such a move would seem a bit of a cheek. "Only kidding," BG would in effect be saying about all those howls of pain so vocally expressed over the last year. After such an about turn, could anyone take what it says seriously ever again?

Actually the shares have been indicating for some little while now that things at BG are not nearly as bad as the company was saying during its attempt to water down the regulator's proposals. The shares kept on rising strongly right through publication of the Monopolies & Mergers Commission report which largely backed Clare Spottiswoode's demands. Many analysts are saying they have further to go.

Now along comes Simon Flowers of NatWest Securities, and others, to say the balance sheet would be easily capable of taking on an extra £2bn to £3bn of debt. Factor in the £513m BG has to pay for the windfall profit tax and that would leave anything up to £2.5bn for buy-backs or special dividends. It would also leave BG with debt gearing of well over 150 per cent, but as Mr Flowers points out, that's nothing exceptional for a utility with long life assets. Moreover, cash interest cover would remain comfortably above 6 times for the foreseeable future, which compares favourably with many other utilities.

So just what was BG complaining about when it challenged Ms Spottiswoode

through the MMC? To be fair, there's a world of difference between the effect of tough new controls on revenue generation and reshaping the balance sheet by swapping equity for debt. For the time being, debt comes cheaper than equity so this might seem a sensible thing for BG to do. Most people won't see it that way, however. To them the act of returning a couple of billion to shareholders is strong evidence that, far from being too tough on BG, the regulator wasn't nearly tough enough.

Despite all this, if BG can afford to do it, it probably should. Lord knows, the company has had to weather worse publicity than a share buy-back is likely to generate. After the traumas of the past few years, long-suffering shareholders deserve a bonus.

### Bank settles back for some quiet reflection

On the face of it, yesterday's retail sales figures provided further grist to the headline writer's mill. The highest rate of high street sales growth since the boom of the late 1980s looked suspiciously like Boom Boom Britain again and the Bank of England's willingness to hold fire on further interest rate rises was starting to look cavalier.

Actually a closer look at the figures suggests the underlying picture is rather less alarming. Household goods are still walking out of Dixons at a fair old lick, but the rate

of growth has slowed markedly since May and June, when the bulk of the building society conversions took effect.

It's not such a good story, of course, but the possibility that consumers have not allowed a few cash windfalls fundamentally to change their spending and saving habits looks more persuasive than it was. The new game of chase the windfall has presumably distorted the figures to an extent, but the high levels of building society deposits announced separately yesterday suggest many people are content to stash their windfalls away.

It all chimes pretty well with a survey this week from Robert Fleming which estimated only a quarter of the £35bn of bandouts would actually be spent. One forecast predicts the windfall boost to consumption could be as little as just 0.25 per cent this year, far less than most have expected.

Of course, the real picture is impossible to predict as no-one knows how much of their new-found dividend income former members of the mutuals will choose to spend, or how their spending patterns will change in the long term because they feel richer with a share certificate in the top drawer.

On balance, however, the Bank's monetary policy committee appears to have got it about right. It jacked up rates to the level Ken Clarke would or should have if he hadn't had an eye on the election. Now it is, rightly, trying some calm reflection.

### IN BRIEF

#### Napoli seeks London listing

Napoli, the Italian football club, is to seek a Stock Exchange listing in London in the near future, according to the club's sole administrator Gianmarco Innocenti. "There are fewer restrictions there than in our country," he said, adding that the club will this year show a profit of 5-6bn lire on turnover of 65bn lire. Napoli's Serie A rivals Lazio recently announced similar plans for a London listing by December, while Bologna is also expected to follow suit. Rules for a listing in Italy require companies to show a three-year profit record.

#### Albert Fisher to sell seafood operations

Albert Fisher, the troubled food group, yesterday confirmed that it intends to dispose of its seafood operations. The company said it "has decided to concentrate on the group's expertise in fruit, vegetables, salads and sauces and dressings". Albert Fisher said this will enhance the group's leading position in "these high growth, healthy eating markets".

Fisher said last week it was likely to sell some businesses after the breakdown of talks with a potential buyer for the whole company. Like many UK food makers, Fisher faced falling demand and increased competition in the recession of the early 1990s after it had spent heavily on acquisitions and expansion in the 1980s.

#### News Corp results disappoint market

News Corporation, Rupert Murdoch's media conglomerate, disappointed the Australian market after posting lower than expected results for the year to June. But the company softened the blow by announcing a good performance of some of its key UK and US operations and its intentions to buy back some of its preferred limited voting stock. One analyst said the results were "very disappointing".

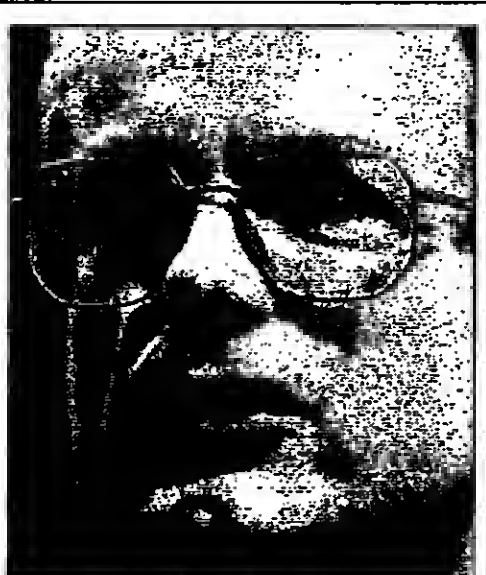
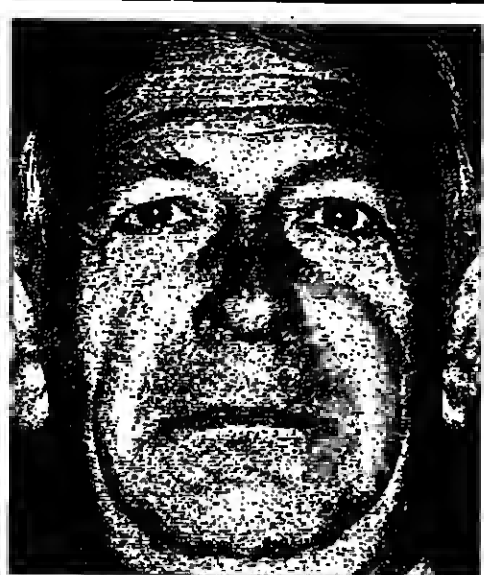
The company reported a 2.5 per cent rise in underlying net profits to A\$1.295bn (£602m). UK newspapers such as *The Times* exceeded expectations, but the HarperCollins publishing division reported an abnormal loss of A\$575m because of restructuring costs.

#### Ionica customer base grows

Ionica Group notched up almost 10,000 extra customers in the three months to the end of June, the company said yesterday. Its customer base rose to 24,595 at the end of June from 15,832 at the end of March. The company, floated last month on the London Stock Exchange and on Nasdaq, said customers in the Eastern region grew to 19,957 from 15,323 while Midlands region customers grew to 4,595 from 309. Nigel Playford, chief executive, said: "The funding we raised last month has given us financial stability and allows us to plan for the future with confidence."

#### 600 Group dampens interim expectations

The 600 Group warned yesterday that profits in the first half would be unlikely to match the "exceptional levels" of the first half of last year. The company said its total order intake during the first quarter is broadly similar to last year, with a growing order book for second-half delivery. A reduced order intake at the company's UK manufacturers was compensated for "to a significant extent" by increased orders in the overseas businesses, the company said.



Responsibility for digital broadcasting is awkwardly split between the regulators Don Cruickshank and Robin Biggam and ministers Chris Smith and Margaret Beckett

## Watchdogs do battle for digital TV

The industry has welcomed Ofcom in principle. But Ofcom and the ITC are resisting merger, writes Cathy Newman

The Government is pressing ahead with plans to create a super-regulator for the communications industry. The move will intensify the battle between Don Cruickshank, director-general of Ofcom, the telecoms regulator, and the Independent Television Commission (ITC), the television watchdog lead by Sir Robin Biggam.

The Department of Trade and Industry is to issue a consultation document in the autumn, asking for comments on its proposals to form a joint broadcast and telecoms regulator, provisionally entitled Ofcom.

A DTI spokesman said the department was liaising with the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). He said: "The Government is committed to having a look at this issue due to the convergence of the telecoms and broadcasting industries. A document will be going out to the industry and interested parties for consultation in the autumn."

The idea of merging Ofcom and the ITC to form Ofcom was first mooted two years ago. Although the details have not been fleshed out, there is a growing conviction in the industry that present regulatory

arrangements are ill-equipped for the convergence of telecoms companies and broadcasters.

For example, the ban which prevents BT from broadcasting is likely to be lifted within months. BT is also indirectly involved with broadcasting through its stake in British Interactive Broadcasting, the interactive television service.

If the ITC and Ofcom do merge, the burning question is which will come out on top? Their most recent - and most public - spat occurred after the ITC awarded three digital terrestrial television licences to British Digital Broadcasting, BSkyB was forced to pull out of the consortium - now jointly owned by Carlton Communications and Granada Group - after competition worries. But the satellite broadcaster secured a long-term programme supply deal with BDB. Mr Cruickshank issued a strongly worded statement criticising the ITC's decision, saying BSkyB's programming deal still "raised substantial competition concerns".

Mr Cruickshank's intervention illustrated the problem caused by the blurring of the two watchdogs' roles. Before digital television reared its head Ofcom and the ITC had clearly separate functions. The ITC was charged with ensuring fair and effective competition in the television industry, while making certain broadcasters provided a wide range of services. Ofcom was to look after "traffic over networks" and control "access to these networks".

At the moment, regulation of digital broadcasting is awkwardly split between the two bodies. The ITC had, for example, hoped to regulate conditional access, the encryption technology used to decode digital television signals. But Ofcom was given responsibility for conditional access in the 1996 Broadcasting Act. The recent decision that interactive services should also come under Ofcom's remit has increased the watchdog's power in this field.

Although the ITC has taken the initiative with its extended

consultation on the "bundling" of cable and satellite channels, it has been forced to share with Ofcom control over electronic programme guides (EPGs), which will enable consumers to navigate digital television channels.

Senior industry figures are virtually unanimous in their belief that, if a super-regulator is created, Ofcom is in a better position to take the leading role. One senior television executive delivered an acerbic judgement of the ITC, saying: "They have consistently proved themselves to be inconsistent. The DCMS does not hold the ITC in particularly high regard."

City analysts agreed. Derek Terrington, media analyst at Teather & Greenwood, said: "Ofcom has the greater status and the technological spin on everything. The ITC, which seems to become more archaic day by day, has surely got a shrinking remit."

The warning watchdogs are unlikely to thank the Government if it decides to throw them into bed together. The

ITC yesterday reiterated its belief that a single content regulator could be created for the broadcasting industry, but resisted a merger with Ofcom. "We don't believe telecoms and broadcasting regulation fit together. Broadcasting regulation is too important to be put in with something as large as telecoms," a spokeswoman said.

Ofcom was just as keen to resist getting any closer to the ITC. "There is a need for regulatory streamlining, but not necessarily through a merger of Ofcom and the ITC," a spokesman for the telecoms regulator said.

Despite the amount of interest, and antagonism, Ofcom is already generating, the communications super-regulator is unlikely to get the all-clear for some while yet. It is thought detailed plans for Ofcom may be put on hold until after the results of a review of utility regulation, launched last month by Margaret Beckett, President of the Board of Trade, are known. The blueprint for the communications regulator may also

have to wait until after Labour's new competition Bill is passed. The Bill, drafted by Mrs Beckett earlier this month, may make some of the duties of Ofcom and the ITC redundant.

The Government needs to answer a whole host of questions before Ofcom becomes official. There is still doubt whether Ofcom would cover radio. Chris Smith, Secretary of State for Culture, has indicated that the radio industry, currently regulated by the Radio Authority, would be better served by a separate regulator.

Neither the DTI nor the DCMS will be short of advice on which media should come under Ofcom's jurisdiction. Interested parties have already written many column inches on the subject. Benet Middleton, principal policy researcher at the Consumers' Association, published a paper in June saying a single communications regulator should merge "many of the functions" of the ITC and Ofcom, but added that the new body should also cover the BBC and the Post Office. Mr Middleton is to expand on his initial thoughts next month. The ITC is also preparing a response to Mr Middleton's points.

## Carpethbaggers flock to B&B

John Willcock

Bradford & Bingley, Britain's second-highest building society, enjoyed an inflow of £383m in retail savings during the first half of the year, partly due to carpethbaggers opening accounts in the hope of a windfall.

"There has been a lot of carpethbagger activity," said the society's finance director, John Smith, yesterday as it unveiled half-year pre-tax profits of £47.7m, down from £52.7m last time.

"We were fairly confident the Nationwide Building Society vote [not to demutualise] would go the right way," said Mr Smith, stressing Bradford & Bingley was as strongly opposed to conversion to plc status as ever.

Societies such as Bradford & Bingley have been besieged this year by people opening new accounts in the hope of receiving windfall payments when the society converts to bank status.

Mr Smith said the society had viewed this latest carpethbagger mania as a "once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to win new business". He added that the society's loyalty scheme, begun last year to distribute a part of profits to

members, had reduced its half-year profits by £10.2m. "We expect carpethbagger activity to die down now the Nationwide vote is out of the way," he said.

The society's assets grew by 16 per cent to just under £18.9bn, reflecting new residential mortgage loans of £927m in the first half and the acquisition of Mortgage Express in May. It said it planned to securitise part of the Mortgage Express loan book later this year, reducing on balance sheet assets by up to £1bn.

The first-half results included a £5.8m charge to cover the costs of an ongoing reorganisation programme and the society said the second-half figures would include a further unspecified charge. It also made a further £3m provision against the costs of redress in pensions mis-selling cases.

"The results show Bradford & Bingley going from strength to strength as a mutual," said the chief executive, Christopher Rodriguez. "We have reduced margins, increased benefits to members and importantly continued to bring down costs."

Mr Rodriguez said its lending margins, the difference between its mortgage and deposit rates, would continue to narrow.

## Huntingdon shares dive on relisting

Huntingdon Life Sciences, the controversial drug testing company which faces the loss of its operating licence, saw its shares slump from 54p to 46.5p yesterday after they were relisted following their suspension late last month.

Huntingdon said at the beginning of the month that it was confident of completing changes demanded by the Home Office of practices relating to its treatment of animals.

The Government has threatened to revoke the group's licence to conduct experiments on animals, saying there had been "extremely serious" failures and omissions at its plant.

The company announced a first-half loss after tax of £308,000 at the beginning of the month, compared with a £2m profit last time. This was after the company incurred costs of £1.1m after disruption following the Home Office investigation into animal cruelty. A 6 per cent fall in sales during the first six months of the year to £34.5m was also partly blamed on such disruption.

Ministers have threatened to withdraw Huntingdon's licence, with the loss of 1,400 jobs, unless it can satisfy 16 conditions by the end of November.

## Centrica ends links with British Gas

Chris Godsmark  
Business Correspondent

Centrica is cutting one of its last remaining ties with the old British Gas since this year's landmark demerger, by moving to new offices close to one of London's most exclusive shopping districts.

Though Centrica has already moved its head office to Slough, it has recently taken a long lease on a building in Clifford Street in the West End of London, just round the corner from Regent Street and the clothes shops on Savile Row.

The move to Clifford Street brings to an end the much criticised decision by the old British Gas to take over part of the palatial Adelphi building overlooking the Thames. The company, then led by chief executive Cedric Brown, occupied the two top floors in the art deco building behind the Strand, which has stunning views over the river.

British Gas was said to have paid a substantial one-off "premium" to take over the Adelphi offices from Euro-tunnel at the beginning of last year, with an annual rent of £1.3m on top. BG, now the pipeline and exploration division, has previously announced

its move to offices in Jermyn Street, which are much larger than Centrica's.

Property sources said Centrica was paying £42.50 per square foot for the 4,500 square feet of office space in deal worth £191,000 a year. The building, which has been refurbished for the new tenant and is considered to be "modest" in size, is owned by Great Portland Estates, the property group and has a lease likely to last for up to 15 years.

A spokesman for Centrica confirmed that the contacts had been signed and the company would take over the building in the autumn. "We have need of London deskspace for directors and other staff who come to town. Our previous building was not really appropriate."

He said Roy Gardner, Centrica's chief executive, was unlikely to have a permanent office in the building, which would be used to hold meetings with other business contacts. "It's purely a base for people when they're in London. The executive offices are all in Charter Court in Slough," said the spokesman.

Estate agents are thought to still be seeking a new tenant to take over the Adelphi offices.

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## business

## BET saves the day for Rentokil

It has taken Sir Clive Thompson, chief executive of Rentokil, almost 18 months to admit what everyone always suspected – that without BET, the business services giant bought for £2.1bn in March last year, he risked failing to honour his self-imposed contract with the City to grow earnings by 20 per cent a year.

But while Sir Clive remains fixated on maintaining Rentokil's 15-year unbroken earnings record – after a £14m currency hit, earnings growth for the half year to June scraped in at 20.3 per cent – the City has been more pre-occupied with whether Rentokil deserves to keep its fancy rating following the BET buy.

Swallowing BET to compensate for a slowdown in growth in the old Rentokil businesses is all very well, but do it Rentokil has had to take on lower-quality businesses. Compared with old Rentokil businesses like pest control and tropical plants which enjoy operating margins of over 30 per cent, BET has brought in a number of commodity-type operations – like back-end office cleaning – and highly cyclical and capital intensive activities like US plant hire and conference centres. It is right here that Rentokil's shares, which stood on a 65 per cent premium to the market before the BET bid, have been downgraded. Shares in the company have underperformed the stock market by 14 per cent over the last 12 months.

The question is whether the current rating, reflecting a market premium of about 30 per cent, is appropriate. Unfortunately these interim results offer little guidance. The results reflected a full contribution from BET against two months last time. But Rentokil refused to spell out the BET results. The concerns are simple. What investors really want to know are what exactly are the sustainable growth prospects of this company. By how much are the old Rentokil businesses slowing? Are they growing at all? What about BET? On the one hand, Sir Clive admitted yesterday that Rentokil's UK pest control is mature. On the other, prospects for BET's electronic security operations, though a small part of the total, look positive. What is likely is that Sir Clive won't be able to meet his 20 per cent target for ever. Yes, there can be adjustments on investment levels here and there to bring the figures in line. But the City is expecting a higher slowdown than just a per cent or two. What no one is clear about is whether Rentokil will slow down to 10 per cent earnings growth a year or 15 per cent. Let's not forget that Rentokil is a tightly managed business. It has good growth business, a dominant market position in areas like cleaning and hygiene and a great geographical spread. That means

## THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

EDITED BY SAMEENA AHMAD

the company is more likely to settle at 15 or 16 per cent annual growth than 10 per cent. In these low inflationary times, that is good. Rentokil probably does not deserve a fancy rating, but 21 times this year and 18 times in 1998 on Merrill Lynch forecasts, looks fair.

## Weir presents a brighter picture

Weir Group, the Glasgow-based engineering company which specialises in businesses such as pump and valve production, may finally be on the turn after an extremely poor run.

Weir's shares have underperformed the FTSE All-Share Index by 44 per cent over the last five years as the group was hit by fierce competition from Swiss and German rivals which were prepared to take on low-return work.

The impact on margins and more recent concerns over sterling's strength has led to the City marking Weir's shares down. This seems harsh, as half of the group's turnover is manufactured abroad and large chunks of its UK busi-

ness is in services rather than exports. Only about £100m of the group's UK sales are exported and the currency effect here is limited as the bulk is shipped to dollar markets rather than to France, Germany and Italy.

The City's view of the company perked up yesterday when Weir reported half-year profits well ahead of expectations at £27.8m, a 44 per cent increase. The group's shares surged 13.5p to 279.5p and analysts upgraded full-year forecasts by around £3m to £58m.

The half-year figures were flattered by a kind of comparison with the first half last year which was affected by problems at the Devonport Dockyard, hit by a refitting programme, and Strachan & Henshaw, its materials handling subsidiary, which had contract problems.

The company is sticking to its policy of not taking on low-margin contracts and is finding that German competitors are starting to come back into line on prices. Weir's US order book is strong and the business is throwing off cash.

Net debt of £26m at the half-year stage last year has turned into a cash pile of nearly £10m this time around.

Further bolt-on acquisitions are expected, though the company is being deterred by high prices, especially in the US.

Weir's shares have been swinging wildly over the last 12 months but analysts are encouraged that the company may have put the worst behind it. On yesterday's close, the shares traded on a forward rating of 13. At these levels, a safe hold.

## Bodycote puts its cash to work

Bodycote, the acquisitive metal treatment specialists, has made impressive use of the £171m it raised in last November's rights issue. Turnover in the first half was 63 per cent up on last year at £100m, and profit before tax grew by 82 per cent to £23m. It could have been even better, but for exchange rates which reduced profits by almost £2m.

Ongoing businesses contributed £16m, an increase of 30 per cent, but last year's acquisitions made £6m, recording impressive improvements in profits and margins within months of being snapped up.

Margins in most of the group's businesses lie between 20 per cent and 30 per cent thanks to a combination of light cost control and £120m of capital investment in new technology over the past eight years. The City has been working when the company will reach the limits of its growth.

But Bodycote has only just scratched the surface of potential markets according to John Chesworth, chief executive. The company is the biggest of its kind in the world but it has less than 5 per cent of the global market for subcontracted work and much less of long-term contract work, which accounts for less than 15 per cent of its existing business.

The group is well spread between the UK, US, Scandinavia and western Europe and between the automotive, aerospace and power generation industries. The fact that Bodycote now has more than 100 operating units in 13 countries poses no problems over controlling the beast, Mr Chesworth claims. The company still has £21m worth of cash from last year's rights issue, which could fund a sizeable acquisition.

Several brokers upgraded full-year forecasts yesterday from around £48m to £50m. Williams de Broe is looking for £54.7m pre-tax. Bodycote's share price has doubled in the past year and rose a further 35p to 942.5p yesterday. However, a prospective rating of 20-21 times looks high enough for now.

## Acquisitive Hays set for next £100m buy

Sameena Ahmad

Hays, the logistics and business services group, is poised to expand its commercial services division with an acquisition of up to £100m.

Speaking yesterday after the group announced its biggest acquisition to date, the £93.4m purchase of two continental European logistics businesses from Australian transport group Mayne Nickless, Hays's chairman Ronnie Frost said the group's commercial division remained the focus of growth.

Hays was looking to add a new activity to the commercial side which includes high-margin businesses like mail order, billing and supplying surgeon's operating packs to hospitals.

Mr Frost quashed speculation that the group might consider a hostile bid for rival Christian Salvesen, having had its friendly approaches rebuffed last August. "It really has gone. I would have loved to do a deal if we had got a recommendation. But as soon as Salvesen went public, they killed it."

More such deals in logistics are likely over the next year, according to Mr Frost, including a move into Italy, possibly to support a French customer looking to expand, and later Spain. Hays is also looking to make a small acquisition, probably less than £50m, in German food distribution to complement its Mordhurst business.

Though Hays has low gearing, Mr Frost emphasised the importance of finding the right opportunity.

Analysts were positive on this latest deal, but preferred to see the group expanding in faster growing areas. Andrew Ripper of Merrill Lynch said: "I'd rather they do this kind of small acquisition than buy Salvesen. Hays has performed well in distribution, but the logistics sector generally has been abysmal. If Hays were a pure logistics company and not in areas like personnel, they would not have such a good rating."

Mr Frost said the acquisition of FDS in France and the smaller Van der Heijden distribution business in Holland for

£72m cash plus debt would enhance earnings by around 3 per cent in the first year after £5m integration costs, and with combined profits of £8.8m and "substantial" growth prospects could add at least £5m to profits. Prior to the acquisitions, analysts had pencilled in £180m for the year to June 1998.

Mr Frost said that the new businesses, which have combined sales of £150m, were a good fit with the group's existing £255m logistics operations in continental Europe. He said that adding FDS, which distributes non-chilled food and other goods to Hays's Fills business in France, which is mainly a chilled goods distributor, would offer customers in both businesses a greater choice.

Van der Heijden adds £35m of sales to Hays's £11m Dutch distributor, making the company a key player in Holland. Analysts said the strengthening logistics on the continent relative to the more difficult UK market, where margins have been under pressure from the supermarkets was positive.

## Speculation over Wassall as it sells General Cable stake

Clifford German

Wassall, the manufacturing conglomerate, yesterday triggered speculation about a possible £500m acquisition spree after it sold its remaining 19.5 per cent stake in General Cable Corporation of the US for almost £100m. It has now raised almost £500m from demerging the business.

Speculation immediately turned to Wassall's publicly disclosed holdings of 5 per cent in Thorn lighting group, Europe's second-largest lighting group, which is capitalised at £175m, and its 2.9 per cent stake in McBride, a quoted company making own-label and minor brands of soap powders, toiletries and personal care products. McBride is capitalised at £260m.

Wassall would look for one or possibly two acquisitions costing £400-500m which fit its acquisition criteria, preferably in

the UK or US but possibly in Europe, said David Roper, deputy chief executive.

It was looking for quoted companies which were currently underperforming or trade sales of subsidiaries of larger companies which no longer fit their owners' criteria, he said.

Wassall's interests include the manufacture of suitcases, bottle tops and sealants and the preferred sectors would be light engineering or manufacturing rather than specialised or high technology businesses.

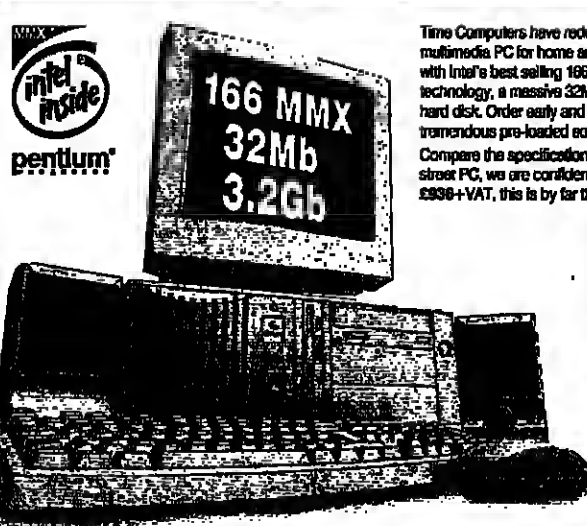
The planned disposal of the remaining holding in General Cable was well flagged, but the price was ahead of expectations and was completed earlier than scheduled. Wassall's majority stake was floated in New York in May at \$21 a share. The remaining 5 million shares were placed yesterday at \$31, each, just 25 cents below the closing price on the New York market on Tuesday night.

Wassall had announced its intention last year to float the entire company in the US, but the minority stake was retained in order to avoid depressing the price of the float.

At the time of the float Wassall had undertaken to hold its remaining stake for at least six months, and had expected to take as long as 12 months to realise it. But in the light of the recent strong demand for General Cable shares, Wassall's New York advisers agreed to release the company from its undertaking and place the shares ahead of schedule.

The successful disposal immediately raised speculation about Wassall's plans for its newly acquired war chest. Mr Roper said yesterday Wassall had more than £300m on deposit in the bank earning around 6 per cent and the money would be reinvested as soon as possible to maintain the return on capital.

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FREE Colour Inkjet Printer (not included)  
105 Standard Pentium™ 105MHz 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## business

## This parallel economy could be a model for Tony Blair

The fearsome Alan Greenspan took over the US Federal Reserve 10 years ago this month, and it has been – if you believe *Fortune* magazine – “10 of the best years in the history of monetary policy”. *Newsweek*, meanwhile, has been praising US Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin as “the best in memory”.

There are no two ways about it: although they look nervously at their sky-rocketing share index, many Americans really think they have finally got the economic problem licked.

It depends how you work it out of course. If you measure the gap between rich and poor children, for example, the USA would be 18th among 18 industrialised countries. Or carbon emissions, or energy consumption per head, or number of children killed by gunfire. Indicators – even the strictly economic ones – are particularly ambiguous when it comes to the US.

The strange thing about modern economics is the way abundance tends to rub shoulders with serious need. Mr Greenspan's economy includes Bill Gates – who is \$180 (£11.25bn) richer than he was a year ago – as well as Memphis, where one in 23 households are bankrupt. But then the UK economy does the same. You can find empty hungry people in any British city, or desperate summer sales to get rid of surplus stock which remains beyond the pockets of most of the population. We have British inner cities packed with people who have time and skills available, surrounded by tasks which desperately need doing – but no cash to bring them all together.

We have long ago solved the problem of production, in other words, and we have yet to manage the problem of distribution. But one idea from an American city might show us all a way forward – if it works. The Commonweal project in Minneapolis aims to find a way of linking over-production with the people who need it most. It is the brainchild of former political activist Joel Hodroff, and it launched its pilot programme in the



David Boyle

We have inner cities packed with people who have time and skills available, surrounded by tasks which desperately need doing – but no cash to bring them all together.

Minneapolis inner city neighbourhood of Lyndale in April.

It works like this. Jane, an unemployed carpenter, does some work for a charity or local agency which can't afford to pay her in dollars, but can afford to pay her in “service credits” – a kind of voluntary sector version of Air Miles.

She can use these in a range of restaurants, shops or other services around the city which have agreed to take them – usually at off-peak times. So a restaurant which has to employ cooks and waiters and heat the place all afternoon for the benefit of a handful of customers, can fill their tables for service credits plus enough dollars to cover their costs.

The businesses signing up include

Camp Scoopy, the theme park in the middle of the gigantic Mall of America, the biggest shopping mall in the USA, just outside the city – Charlie Brown happens to be from Minneapolis. Camp Scoopy has to stay open through busy Saturdays as well as quiet Wednesdays.

They can clear their excess stock without expensive marketing, but at the same time the businesses are underpinning a parallel economy where people can “earn” for doing the kind of community tasks the government now seems unable to pay for itself.

It is early days yet for Commonweal, which was launched with the backing of the local council, a couple of local banks and some big thinkers like Alvin Toffler and Paul Hawken.

There are too few participants yet to launch their patented dual-track credit card known, rather self-consciously, as the “Community HeroCard”.

“But we are using the world's first dual-currency service slips,” says Mr Hodroff with enthusiasm. “It is going well, which means we are finding it easier to talk to major banks and retailers about taking part.”

If it all works out, it could be a bonanza for Commonweal – they take a percentage of each transaction, like a credit card company – but it could also be an interesting new model for Tony Blair, and other politicians looking for new ways of unleashing the support of volunteers while their budgets shrink.

The options before most governments these days are pretty bleak. They can try to get local needs met. They can print more money – but that would cause inflation and scare the international money markets. They can cut the budgets and hope for the best, but then they get voted out of office.

The Commonweal idea is to use the economy's manifest over-capacity to put purchasing power in the hands of people who don't have it at the moment. “We have work to do, we have plenty of people with skills, we have sufficient technical and management capacity, we even have ade-

quate energy and raw materials. The only thing that's getting in the way and preventing that work from being completed is a lack of money,” says Mr Hodroff. “That's absurd. Money was created to promote economic activity, not to inhibit it. We have outgrown the old scarce commodity money and it is time to introduce something new.”

Commonweal's credits are a new twist to the phenomenon of computer money, which – unlike pounds and dollars – is infinite. Air Miles or Sainsbury's Reward points are limited only by the cash-flow and productive capacity of the company issuing them, and because they don't want to be overwhelmed. They come from nowhere and, when they are spent, they don't go into the bank vault – they just get deleted.

Private sector finances like these do not circulate in the traditional way. They exist to encourage people to act in a certain way – normally to buy more. So why not invest some corporate “money” which encourages people to get active in the community.

The idea of “service credits” or “time dollars” paid to volunteers has become a familiar aspect of American life, though it has yet to catch on in the UK. You can earn them in well over 100 US cities now – but Commonweal is probably the first time big business has been involved in the idea.

But if they want to offload surplus stock in a useful way, Commonweal needs to tackle poverty. “Participation will be totally voluntary,” Mr Hodroff says. “But my guess is that people will flood off welfare to earn 10 community service dollars per hour.”

It is early days yet, and many people might prefer welfare. You don't, after all, want to build a second-tier economy for poor people – panned off by participating businesses with their second-rate stock.

It is a legitimate concern, but Commonweal is an exciting idea. If Tony Blair wants to find ways of regenerating the social capital lost over the past generation, this might be a good place to start looking.

## Merman's philosophy for the Nineties – small is beautiful

## PEOPLE &amp; BUSINESS



Sophie Merman. Doesn't want pressure to come from the City

Sophie Merman got the business equivalent of a black eye when her 1980s creation, Sock Shop, went under, but her enthusiasm for her own business venture, Trotters, a children's wear retailer, is undimmed.

“New” is a slight exaggeration since she founded the company with her husband, Richard Ross, in 1990. Their first shop was in King's Road, Chelsea, and the second followed 18 months later on Kensington High Street. Now they are launching Trotters Direct – a lavishly illustrated catalogue offering designer kids' wear by mail order.

“We've had a fantastic number of enquiries, with requests for the catalogue from 81 countries,” says Ms Merman. “We called in Fiorella Massey to make the catalogue attractive for children to look at, with lots of bright pictures and watercolours.”

So can we look forward to a rapid expansion of the shop chain, followed by a float?

“No. I know you should never say never, but I've got three small children and I want to remain a relatively small private company. More shops and you lose exclusivity.” In what could serve as a warning to entrepreneurs starting out today, Ms Merman concludes: “Times have changed. Small is beautiful now. I want any pressures on me to come from myself, not from the City.”

Good to see Totty in the news – Totty the Bradford-based construction company, that is, which formed part of a consortium which reversed into listed David Bramwell.

David Bramwell, chief executive of Peterhouse Group, the company which led the reverse takeover, explains that there has been a Totty family business since 1864, and there was a member of the Totty family in the company as recently as 1989. “Since then the company's changed hands a number of times,” says Mr Bramwell. “Despite the lovely factor of the name, the company is very well known from Newcastle to Leicester.”

Take care you don't stand in front

of Zeneca's headquarters in Stanhope Gate, Mayfair – you may get hurt in the stampede of executives fleeing the building.

Yesterday Nick Bateman became the third suit at Zeneca to leave the drugs company in a fortnight. He follows John Mayo, Zeneca's finance director who defected to GEC two weeks ago, and Dr David U'Prichard, who jumped ship last week to join SmithKline Beecham.

Mr Bateman has joined drug database software provider Chemical Design Holdings as chief executive. Also joining the fast-growing company in Chipping Norton is John Lambert, a freelance healthcare consultant, who will be finance director. Mr Bateman will have plenty of work to do. Chemical Design's share price has slipped this year from a high of 265p in February to close at 160p on Tuesday.

There's one one with a harder heart than a London club doorman, as Ted Graham, BT's chief spokesman, found out to his cost this week.

BT is about to move into posh new premises in Berkeley Square, Mayfair, just next door to swanky

private club Mortons. Our Ted, mindful of the amount of good business he could steer Mortons' way, assumed he would be allowed into the club free, gratis and for nothing. Not so. Cough up £375 or stay out, club staff informed him.

Philip Randall has been elected the new managing partner of the UK side of Arthur Andersen, following the elevation of his colleague, Jim Wadia, to the post of managing partner of the worldwide accountancy behemoth.

Mr Randall tells me it wasn't a terribly tight contest. “Mine was the only name on the ballot paper.” It follows a period of infighting at the giant firm during which the accountancy side was unable to agree with the management consultants about who should lead the overall global firm. Mr Wadia just missed the spot.

One of the things which will exercise Mr Randall in his new job is the impending 40th anniversary of the arrival of Arthur Andersen in the UK from the firm's native Chicago.

John Willcock

## Foreign Exchange Rates

Country	Sterling	Spot	1 month	3 months	D-Mark	Spot	1 month	3 months
US	1.5825	22.20	63.60	1000	32.31	98.98	0.5386	
Canada	2.2165	71.46	208.20	1382	32.31	98.98	0.5386	
France	2.2885	97.80	285.20	1858	32.31	98.98	0.5386	
Germany	5.9800	340.20	880.80	62545	32.31	98.98	0.5386	
Italy	2.0715	104.00	307.20	1958	32.31	98.98	0.5386	
Japan	1.5021	35.31	108.01	10802	32.31	98.98	0.5386	
Belgium	6.0100	340.20	880.80	62545	32.31	98.98	0.5386	
Netherlands	3.2321	108.26	318.30	20906	32.31	98.98	0.5386	
Sweden	1.2311	30.80	92.40	9240	32.31	98.98	0.5386	
Spain	2.0870	37.26	116.97	11697	32.31	98.98	0.5386	
Switzerland	2.4371	104.00	307.20	1958	32.31	98.98	0.5386	
Australia	2.2455	39.34	125.76	12576	32.31	98.98	0.5386	
Hong Kong	2.2455	39.34	125.76	12576	32.31	98.98	0.5386	
Malaysia	4.4222	24.31	72.93	7293	32.31	98.98	0.5386	
New Zealand	2.2455	39.34	125.76	12576	32.31	98.98	0.5386	
Saudi Arabia	2.2455	39.34	125.76	12576	32.31	98.98	0.5386	
Singapore	2.2455	39.34	125.76	12576	32.31	98.98	0.5386	

## Other Spot Rates

Country	Sterling	Dollar	Country	Sterling	Dollar
Argentina	1.5825	0.9598	Nigeria	1.5825	0.9598
Austria	2.2885	1.0140	Poland	1.5825	0.9598
Brazil	1.7343	1.0988	Philippines	1.5825	0.9598
China	3.2121	1.2800	Portugal	1.5825	0.9598
India	5.4201	3.5359	Romania	1.5825	0.9598
France	2.2885	1.0140	Russia	1.5825	0.9598
Germany	5.9800	2.0000	South Africa	1.5825	0.9598
Greece	4.5310	2.0000	Taiwan	1.5825	0.9598
Italy	2.0715	1.0140	Thailand	1.5825	0.9598
Japan	1.5021	0.9598	USA	1.5825	0.9598

Forward rates quoted high to low are at a discount; subtract from spot rate. Rate quoted low to high are at a premium; add to spot rate. \*Dollar rates quoted as reciprocals. For the latest foreign exchange rates call 0891 128 3033. Cable cost 50p per minute.

## Interest Rates

UK Base	7.00%	Germany Discount	2.50%	US Prime	8.50%	Japan Discount	0.50%
France	3.00%	Canada	4.50%	Fed Funds	5.50%	Belgium	2.50%
Italy	6.25%	Denmark	4.75%	Spain	5.50%	Switzerland	1.00%
Netherlands	3.00%	Sweden	2.96%	10-Day Repo	5.25%	Sweden	1.00%
Advances	3.00%	Hong Kong	4.00%	1-Month Repo	5.25%	Denmark	2.50%

## Bond Yields

Country	5yr yield %	10yr yield %	Country	5yr yield %	10yr yield %
UK	7.00%	8.00%	Netherlands	2.50%	3.50%
Germany	6.00%	7.00%	Spain	5.50%	6.50%
France	4.75%	5.75%	Sweden	2.96%	3.96%
Italy	6.25%	7.25%	Switzerland	1.00%	2.00%
Netherlands	3.00%	4.00%	Denmark	2.50%	3.50%

## Money Market Rates

Overnight	7 Day	1 Month	3 Months	6 Months	1 Year
Interbank	6.75%	7.00%	7.25%	7.50%	7.75%
Local Authority	6.75%	7.00%	7.25%	7.50%	7.75%
Local Authority	6.75%	7.00%	7.25%	7.50%	7.75%
Local Authority	6.75%	7.00%	7.25%	7.50%	7.75%

## Tourist Rates

Country	£ Buy	£ Buy	£ Buy	£ Buy	£ Buy
Australia	2.1160	France	6.6320	New Zealand	2.4400
Austria	2.1160	Germany	2.6880	Norway	11.8450
Belgium	6.6320	Italy	6.6320	Portugal	200.0000
Canada	2.1160	Japan	1.5021	Spain	16.6667
Denmark	6.6320	Sweden	2.9600	Switzerland	1.0000
France	6.6320	Switzerland	1.0000	USA	1.5825

## Life Financial Futures

Contract	Settlement price	High/Low for day	Est/Contd	Open Interest
Long Gilt	115.04	115.14	115.01	29994
Short Gilt	115.04	115.14	115.01	29994
Long Gilt	115.04	115.14	115.01	29994
Short Gilt	115.04	115.14	115.01	29994

## Life FTSE 100 Index Option

Series	4000	4500	5000	5500	Call/Put
Set	162/75	151/87	130/119	79/148	...
Oct	214/11	192/24	154/156	123/163	...
Nov	217/17	195/20	157/159	126/166	...
Dec	219/19	197/22	159/161	128/168	...

## Energy

Brent Crude	Oil (barrel)	WTI	Products	Oil (barrel)
Set	17.75	17.75	Set	17.75
Oct	17.75	17.75	Oct	17.75
Nov	17.75	17.75	Nov	17.75

## Commodity Indices

Index	Set	Oct	Nov	Dec
Set	17.75	17.75	17.75	17.75
Oct	17.75	17.75	17.75	17.75
Nov	17.75	17.75	17.75	17.75

## Industrial Metals

Aluminium	Cash	3mths	Volume	LME Stock	chg
Set	1884.00	1828.00	113818	338775	425
Oct	1884.00	1828.00	113818	338775	425
Nov	1884.00	1828.00	113818	338775	425

## Precious Metals

Platinum	Set	Oct	Nov	Dec
Set	405.50	405.50	405.50	405.50
Oct	405.50	405.50	405.50	405.50
Nov	405.50	405.50	405.50	405.50

## Agricultural

Cocoa	Set	Oct	Nov	Dec
Set	1045	1045	1045	1045
Oct	1045	1045	1045	1045
Nov	1045	1045	1045	1045

## Other Softs

Maize	Set	Oct	Nov	Dec
Set	1045	1045	1045	1045
Oct	1045	1045	1045	1045
Nov	1045	1045	1045	1045

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2021 من الراجل







## sport

# The contribution made by men who saw sport as a means of escaping from the darkness ought not to be forgotten

An old collier was once asked on television for his views about the violence then evident in Welsh rugby. "When there is always a chance that the roof will come in on your head, you don't worry about a boot in the face on Saturday," he replied.

A legend in the North-east of England is that any position in a football team could be filled by showing down a pit shaft. From the coalfields of Lancashire and south Yorkshire came three of the greatest managers football has known: Matt Busby, Bill Shankly and Jock Stein. Shankly's small village of Glenbuck alone sent out 30 professionals.

Numerous rugby and football internationals and such notable fighters as Jimmy Wilde, Tommy Farr, Eddie Thomas and Howard Win-

stone were bred in the Welsh mining valleys. The most feared of England's fast bowlers, Harold Larwood, was a Nottinghamshire collier. Rugby league recruited many of its stars from the coalfields of Yorkshire.

Doubts about the long-term future of Britain's mining industry recalls its importance in British sporting history. From the blackness of a working life underground, the perils many first endured at only 14 years old, came many heroes of the sports fields.

In many cases, one of the most significant things about their influence was understandable social awareness. "The first thing you must do is join the players' union," my father said when I left home at 17 to fol-

low him into football. At the same time he was offered a professional contract of £3 per week by Merthyr Town, who were then in the old Third Division. "When Merthyr refused to pay the extra 10 shillings [they wanted a few hours later] your grandfather thought I was worth, I cried all the way home," he said.

"Not because I wasn't going to get a living from football but because it meant going back down that black hole, to work in winter when it was dark and dark when I came up again." No wonder that he was a committed socialist and, until the horrors of Stalinism were revealed, a member of the Communist Party.

On the face of it, you might think that people of my generation and beyond dwell too much on the



KEN JONES

past, but it was from mining communities that British sport drew much of its impetus. If we look back only briefly on those times, men who had escaped from the harshest of working environments were everywhere in football, some nimble,

some hard, all seeing things in the alternative light of deprivation. Nobody in my life has conveyed a more distinct impression of genuine toughness than Wilf Copping, who played in Arsenal's great team in the 1930s and made 20 appearances for England. A Yorkshireman, his craggy, blue-scarred face could have been cut from the coalface he worked when little more than a boy. Losing blood meant nothing, cowardice appalled him.

The story goes that Copping took on Italy single-handed in an infamous encounter at Highbury in 1934 that saw three England players injured seriously after only 20 minutes. If the work of Copping was hard but fair, he quickly restored the balance.

The broad philosophy that established Stein as perhaps the leading manager in British football history was shaped underground and by the working-class values embedded in his nature.

Stein, who worked in the pits for 11 years from the age of 16, said: "I knew that wherever I went, whatever work I did, I'd never be alongside better men. It was a place where phoney and cheats couldn't survive for long. Down there for eight hours, you're away from God's fresh air and sunshine and there's nothing that can compensate for that. I think everybody should go down the pit at least once to learn what darkness is."

If those of us whose roots are in old mining communities must guard

against an overkill of sentimentality, we are entitled to argue that our environment has given more to British sport. If the pit-head wheels have almost stopped turning, the legacy lives on.

The tone of sport in the 1990s is set by the elite corps, that is to say by the richest gamesmen - the stars who have sweated their way up to prodigious salaries, are admirably interviewed and receive on television and in popular newspapers the same adoring space as royals and rock stars.

The impulse to take up a game is now very often the impulse to earn a fortune. In that context, the contribution made by men who saw sport as a means of escaping from darkness ought not to be forgotten.

## Sampras masters sentiment

John Roberts finds the world No 1 in confident yet nostalgic mood as he prepares for the start of next week's US Open at Flushing Meadow

Pete Sampras had travelled little more than 30 yards across New York's Flushing Meadow, from the US Open's former centre court to the new one due to be inaugurated next Monday, and was already feeling nostalgic. "I kind of miss the old stadium," the world champion said, "that's kind of where I made my mark in 1990."

As a 19-year-old in 1990, Sampras became the tournament's youngest men's singles champion. In the process, the Californian defeated the last two men to win the title three times in a row, Ivan Lendl, in the quarter-finals, and John McEnroe, in the semi-finals, and overwhelmed Andre Agassi in the final.

Success over the coming fortnight would bring Sampras a third consecutive triumph in his home Grand Slam event - a three-Pete according to the local media - and a fourth in all. It would be the 11th Grand Slam singles title of his career, putting him level with Bjorn Borg and Rod Laver and one short of Roy

Boris Becker has withdrawn from the US Open following the death from cancer of his adviser and close friend, Axel Meyer-Woelken, tournament officials announced yesterday.

The 29-year-old Becker, a former world No 1 and winner of the 1990 US Open, had been expected to make his final appearance in a Grand Slam at the event, which starts on Monday.

Albert Costa replaces Becker as the No 16 seed, becoming the fifth Spaniard to be seeded in the men's singles.

Emerson's record 12. More-over, Sampras would have acquired three of the year's four major singles titles. The last man to accomplish that was Mats Wilander in 1988. The Swede was unable to win at Wimbledon while the French championship has eluded Sampras.

Acquainting himself as much as possible with the fresh environment of the 23,000-seater Arthur Ashe Stadium, named after the late champion of the United States, Wimbledon, Australia and manifold causes relating to freedom and dignity, Sampras is practising on the new court this week.

How did it compare with the adjacent, much-criticised Louis Armstrong Stadium, the seating capacity of which is scheduled to be reduced from 20,000 to 10,000 after this year's championships?

"It's going to be a pleasure to play in the new stadium," Sampras said. "It's beautiful, very well put together. It's a great impression just walking in there and seeing the new seats. The locker-room facilities are much nicer, and it will be a lot more convenient to get around."

The concrete playing surface at the US Open makes it possible for competitors to practice on the show courts.

"The speed of the new court

seems pretty medium," Sampras said. "Pretty much the same as the other court in the other stadium. I'm playing in the Arthur Ashe charity match on Saturday, so I'll have a good feel of what it's going to be like with the linesmen and the ballboys."

During a break in training to participate in a media conference call organised by the ATP Tour, Sampras was questioned about the current decline of potential tennis talent in the United States.

Was there part of him that thought if Arthur Ashe was spending all that money (around £234m), he would have spent it on grass-roots tennis rather than a stadium? "Probably," Sampras replied. "I didn't know Arthur well, but that was something he was much interested in."

"I think we have some good young players. I don't know if they'll have the impact of what I've done or Andre [Agassi] or Michael [Chang] or Jim [Courier]. I think it goes in cycles," Sampras said. "Spain has been a country that's stepped up, at least in the last couple of years. I still think the interest in tennis in the States is very good. Who knows, in 10 years' time we might have four or five young Americans."

"I think all the players are happy that the new stadium has been built. It brings a whole new feel to the US Open. You know, Arthur Ashe was a great man to use for the stadium, so it should be fun."

One reporter was curious to know what Sampras's reaction was to people who say that tennis can be a victim of its success, that when it and in form he is too good for the rest. "I have no reaction," Sampras said. "Really what I want to do is just go out and try to play and win. That's the way I've always approached the game."

That, plus the ability to overcome numerous setbacks. "I've always had the confidence that I can come back or I can kind of deal with some tough stuff," Sampras said. "I felt my year was a little bit up and down but basically Wimbledon, where I really played about as well as I could. That kind of set the tone for having a good summer."

"Just when Grand Slam time comes around, the juices start going and I'm ready to go. I just have the confidence that if things aren't going well, I have the game to come back. I've never been insecure about my tennis. It's always nice to have that."

Not to mention the ability to channel his emotions on the court. "A lot of it is just my personality. I've always been kind of laid back, don't get too bothered from things. You know, bad line calls are just going to happen."

"I've always handled them the way I am off court. You know, just try to play the next point. I've always tried to be someone that doesn't lose his composure. It helps me to be a better player. That was kind of the way I was raised, the way I'm sure I'll always be."

## Henman's tough draw

Tim Henman has been given a tough draw in the opening round of next week's US Open at Flushing Meadow.

The British No 1, who missed being seeded because his ranking has slipped to 20 in the world, will play Thomas Muster, the No 5 seed from Austria.

Greg Rusedski, the British No 2, has been more fortunate for he will play the American David Wheaton, a wild card.

Wheaton was ranked as high as 12 in 1991 and reached the semi-final of Wimbledon that year but, after an Achilles injury last year, he dropped out of the world's top 100 and is now ranked 142.

However, his form has been improving recently. Pete Sampras, the No 1 seed, faces a qualifier, while the No 2 seed and fellow-American Michael Chang will play the Swede Patrik Fredriksson.



Martin McCague (right) is ordered out of the Kent attack by Alan Whitehead yesterday. Photograph: Richard Austin.

## Long hot summer reaches boiling point

Derek Pringle says that pitch battles have long been a part of the game

Until the goings-on of the last seven days distorted public perception, cricket and hot tempers were not concepts that were readily associated with each other. But after last week's argy-bargy during an ill-tempered NatWest semi-final, and yesterday's first-innings ban on Kent's fast bowler Martin McCague, for deliberate intimidatory bowling, cricket's pristine image has begun to tarnish.

McCague, howling for Kent in the first day of their County Championship match with Somerset at Taunton, was taken off after just 21 overs. Having received a warning in his first over for overdoing the bounce, the umpire, Alan Whitehead, then ordered him off in his third; his final sequence being

bouncer, bouncer, beamer, the last two being called no-ball. Under Law 42.8, which deals with short-pitched bowling as a means of unfair play, the umpire, having already warned the bowler, is quite within his powers to order the captain to take him off. Whitehead had previously warned Ian Botham for much the same thing against Australia during the Headingley Test of 1985. Botham, however, did not transgress further, as McCague did yesterday.

With tiffs and skirmishes in general on the increase, due to the recent hot and humid weather, it would be tempting

for cricket to lay the blame on the same doorstep. Convenient, were it not for the fact that, hidden from television - an option not available to Mark Butts and Robert Croft's shoving match last week - it has been going on for donkey's years.

Before the stripies ties at Lord's and elsewhere choke on their grin and tonic, aggression is not something that can be turned on and off at the flick of a switch. Unlike other team games, cricket can be distilled into a series of one to one duels. Unsurprisingly then, it can get personal, especially when one party is getting humiliated

as McCague was when Rob Turner took 22 runs off his first two overs.

While no one condones persistent law-breakers, there are punishments available and cricket must not get its knickers in a twist every time something out of the ordinary occurs.

As a game that was not so long ago described as elitist, exclusionist and dull, its recent notoriety will probably come as a relief to those who probably thought you first had to enrol at finishing school to play it.

Nobody wants to see yobbish behaviour on a grand scale, but if cricketers can't occasionally show they are human, how on earth are we going to popularise the game?

## Law takes charge again

JON CULLEY  
reports from Worksop  
Essex 319-4 v  
Nottinghamshire

The strength of Australian cricket can be measured in those players left out of this summer's Ashes party as well as those included. Stuart Law, the 28-year-old Essex batsman, was among those considered not good enough, yet he has plundered runs handsomely around the county circuit. His omission might not have pleased him - but his county could not be more delighted.

Yesterday, Law overcame the handicap of a slow, greenish pitch here to record his fourth Championship century of the season, and his sixth in all first-class matches, equalling his 1996 tally. It enabled Essex, still title contenders even in eighth place at the start of this round, to establish a promising position after their captain, Paul Prichard, had won the toss on his return after injury.

The wicket here has a history of assisting the spinners and

Essex have come well equipped, with Peter Such, who began his career with Nottinghamshire, bringing local knowledge as well as his other attributes.

Fluent strokeplay proved difficult but the Queenslander was prepared to take on the bowling and take a few risks. It paid off when the second of two sixes off the left arm of Usman Akmal, sailed towards the caravan park at midwicket to bring him 53 off 79 balls. Law scored his second 50 off only 38 balls, moving to three figures when he hit Matthew Downman in the air over extra cover for the 15th of 18 fours.

After Prichard and Darren Robinson had put on 94 for the first wicket, Law was well supported by Tim Hodgson, playing in only his second Championship match, who revealed himself as a sound technician of some promise before Nathan Asle deceived him with a slower ball.

Law added 94 in 23 overs with Paul Grayson for the fourth wicket before the Australian skied the first ball of Akmal's post-tea spell and was caught in front of the wicket by the keeper, Wayne Noon.

## Knight's nerve tested

MIKE CAREY  
reports from Edgbaston  
Warwickshire 252  
Worcestershire 20-2

Some things are easier to forecast than others. The rain, for instance, which trimmed yesterday's morning session by 22 overs was not foreshadowed by the experts. David Houghton, Worcestershire's coach, was much nearer the mark when he said he expected a seam bowlers' pitch here.

Neither side would have wanted it any other way. Unevenly grassed, the pitch provided enough movement and, from time to time, variations in bounce for any self-respecting seamer to have a birthday. Warwickshire's bizarre batting display tended to suggest they expected an unplayable ball any minute.

Alas for Worcestershire. Phil Newport, who would probably have made the ball do everything except talk, was unfit and the new ball was in the hands of the relatively inexperienced Alamgir Shariyar and Mameer Mirza who, in their anxiety to

exploit the conditions, found it hard to put two successive deliveries in the right place.

Even so, there was enough going on for Andy Moles and Nick Knight, both recovering from broken fingers, to be justifiably apprehensive against the new ball. Knight's innings was probably no better, though certainly no worse, than he feared after a seven-week absence.

Unsurprisingly, he found timing elusive. Once he even hurriedly took a band off the wicket, helped by a fair amount of bowling at his legs, and when he perished it was to an attempted cut off a ball that bounced more than he expected.

By now, with the ball starting to swing more than earlier in the sultry afternoon, the bowlers had no doubt relaxed and Shariyar often went past the outside edge with splendid deliveries. But Warwickshire had long since embarked on a cheerful roller-coaster ride in which everything off length or line was heartily thumped away, typified by Neil Smith's 40 from 67 balls before he fell to the best of Steve Rhodes's four catches.

## Wells makes Cork and Derbyshire suffer

The Leicestershire opener Vince Wells, dropped by Dominic Cork when he had made 25, made bottom of the table Derbyshire pay with a magnificent 190 at Grace Road yesterday. Wells' third century of the season helped Leicestershire to 373 for 7 at the close.

Kevin Curran made the highest score of his career to help Northamptonshire fight back against Glamorgan at Aber-gavenny. The veteran all-rounder came in at 51 for 3 and hit an unbeaten 159 as his side closed on 302 for 8.

Yorkshire have re-signed the Australian left-hander Darren Lehmann on a one-year contract as their overseas player for next season, and he repaid their faith with his 11th innings of 50 or more in 19 Championship innings to put Yorkshire in command against Sussex at Scarborough.

The Australian left-hander built on the advantage forged by the seamers Chris Silverwood and Paul Hutchison, who shared the honours as the victors were bowled out for 157 after winning the toss. Lehmann was unbeaten on 63 at the close as Yorkshire reached 174 for 5.

### CRICKET SCOREBOARD

#### Britannic Assurance County Championship

First day of four; 11.0 today

#### Durham v Middlesex

CHESHIRE-LEICESTERSHIRE (4pts) are 285 for 8 in their first innings against Middlesex (0).

#### Durham won toss

DURHAM - First Innings

J J B Lowe 100, R B Jones 38

S Horton 26, B Brown 29

J E Morris 26, G Gearing 11

C E Bown 26, D B Harris 11

Y M P Spence 8, G Gearing 8

R M S Watson 26, G Gearing 8

M J Bates not out 22

M J Bates not out 22

Extras (17, 85, w2, nb16) 30

Total (for 8, 85.2 overs) 285

Felt: 1-65, 2-68, 3-131, 4-153, 5-239, 6-250

To bat: J Belling, S J E Brown, A Walker

Bowling: Fraser 22-6-47-0; Wells 15-2-69-0; Wells 15-2-69-0; Johnson 17-3-11-0

2: Durham 123-2-28-0; Warwick 3-3-11-0

MIDDLESEX - J C Pooley, J H Wells, M Gearing, O A Shaw, P Vasek, J R Brown, P P Duth, D C West, R L Johnson, J P Hewitt, A R C Fraser

Umpires: A Dudson and M J Ketchen

#### Glamorgan v Northants

ABERGAU-LE-STRECH (4pts) are 302 for 8 in their first innings against Glamorgan (0).

#### Northamptonshire won toss

Northamptonshire - First Innings

D J Roberts 14, M J Bates 14

R J Warren 26, S Harris 11

L E Foster 26, M J Bates 11

R J Bailey 8, J Bates 8

K M Curran not out 22

T J Gales 26, M J Bates 11

T J Gales 26, M J Bates 11

T J Gales 26, M J Bates 11

T J Gales 26, M J Bates 11

T J Gales 26, M J Bates 11

T J Gales 26, M J Bates 11

#### Leicestershire v Derbyshire

LEICESTERSHIRE (4pts) are 373 for 7 in their first innings against Derbyshire (0).

#### Leicestershire won toss

Leicestershire - First Innings

V J Wells 190, D B Harris 11

D B Harris 11, D B Harris 11

J J Sutcliffe 8, D B Harris 11

J J Sutcliffe 8, D B Harris 11

J J Sutcliffe 8, D B Harris 11

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J J Sutcliffe 8, D B Harris 11

J J Sutcliffe 8, D B Harris 11

#### SOMERSET - First Innings

R J Turner 144, P C E Holloway 109

S C Edmondson not out 109

M L Llewellyn 26, W B Ealham 26

M L Llewellyn 26, W B Ealham 26

M L Llewellyn 26, W B Ealham 26

M L Llewellyn 26, W B Ealham 26

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## Halifax's denial on McAlpine move

Rugby League  
DAVE HADFIELD

Halifax have denied reports that they are in talks with Huddersfield aimed at having a merged club at the McAlpine Stadium. Marriage brokers have hinted at a wedding between Halifax, with their Super League status, and their West Yorkshire neighbours, with their state-of-the-art ground.

Halifax announced on Sunday that their match against Oldham was "probably" the last league game at their antiquated Thrum Hall ground, but that, says their chief executive, Nigel Wood, is because their plan to move in with Halifax Town FC at The Shay is still alive, despite repeated delays.

"There is no dialogue between us and Huddersfield," Wood said. "We are going to The Shay. There should be an announcement within 14 days and we should be playing there next season. We are pursuing a future as a stand-alone Super League club. We have had a bad couple of months, but we don't see Huddersfield as the way forward."

"The delay with The Shay has been to make sure that we will be moving to something better than we have got now."

A Rugby League rescue squad of three arrived at Central Park yesterday to help Wigan through the crisis triggered by the resignation of the club's chairman, Jack Robinson.

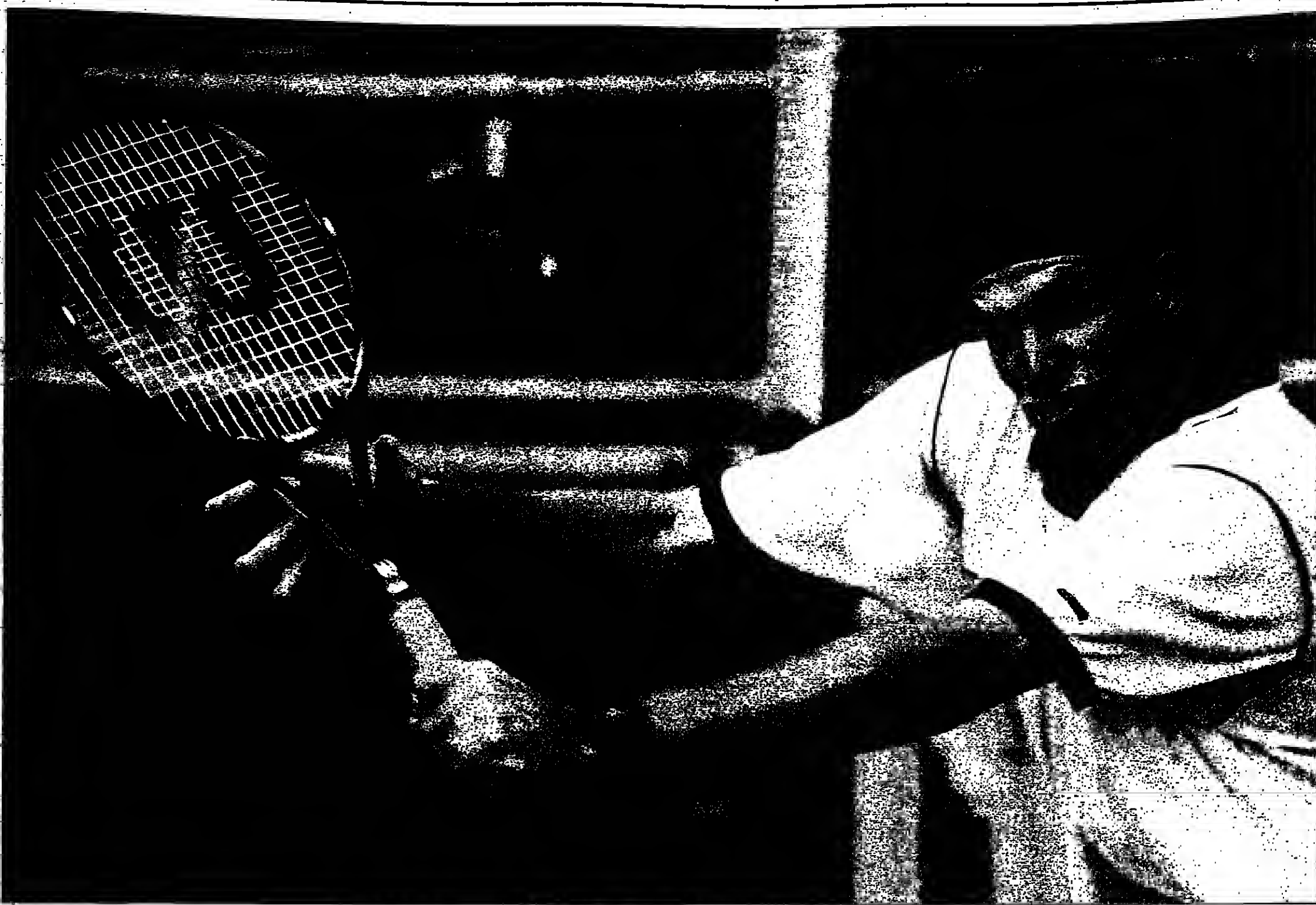
The RFL's vice-chairman and finance kingpin, Roy Woodby, along with the finance director, Tony Eagleton, and its legal advisor, Ronnie Teeman, were assessing the situation.

Among the financial commitments they may look at is the huge contract under which Denis Betts is due to return to the club next season.

The League's chief executive, Maurice Lindsay, has already been highly critical of what it will cost to bring Betts home from Auckland and the team from headquarters could argue that it is irresponsible in the club's current plight.

The first tour of the United States by a British representative side is to take place next month when Great Britain Students play three matches there.

Players from all four home nations are in a squad that will play two matches against student opposition, followed by one against the full international line-up, the USA Tomahawks.



Britain's Greg Rusedski, now up to No 23 in the world, plays a backhand volley in his three-set defeat of Mikael Tillström, of Sweden, in the Boston Open on Tuesday

Photograph: Victoria Archo/AP

## Ballesteros keeps wild cards close to chest

Golf  
ANDY FARRELL  
Reports from Strathfarn,  
Co Kildare

While Tom Kite agonised over his two Ryder Cup wild-card selections, only deciding last Sunday over dinner with his wife and vice-captain, his one consolation was that he was not Seve Ballesteros.

The question of how Europe's captain is going to

squeeze three of his best players — Nick Faldo, Jose Maria Olazabal and Jesper Parnevik — into two positions has been vexing most people, including those likely to make up the team. But not Ballesteros. He has already made up his mind.

Ballesteros does not have to announce his final two until the 10 automatic places are filled at the end of next week's BMW International in Munich. Instead of waiting until the following

Monday to reveal all, Ballesteros will wait only 45 minutes after the tournament finishes.

Ballesteros said he made up his mind prior to last week's USPGA, when Faldo and Olazabal missed the cut on 13 and 12 over par respectively. Unlike Faldo and Parnevik, Olazabal can still qualify and is playing in the Smurfit European Open, which starts today. With £141,660 for the winner here and a first prize of £125,000 in Munich, anyone

down to 125th on the qualifying list can still make the team, mathematically speaking.

More realistically, it is the possibility of his countryman, who is 12th in the standings, making the team automatically that Ballesteros was clearly referring to when he said: "One thing is for sure, I expect the situation to change in the next two weeks."

"If the situation ends as it is right now, I have already made up my mind. And if the situa-

tion changes, I have made up my mind. It is a secret until 31 August. It is not a dilemma, it is very simple."

Asked whether he would be taking into account Faldo's performance in the World Series this week in Ohio, Ballesteros added: "Whatever happens, it is not going to make a difference." Having swapped his player's hat, the one he can't put for toffee, for his captain's sombrero, Ballesteros was in much

improved spirits. When probed further, he replied: "Do you think you are Columbus?"

Unless Ballesteros, who confirmed he will definitely not pick himself and named Miguel Angel Jimenez as his vice-captain, was all red herrings, there were enough clues for even Dumfries to work it out. What he would like is for Olazabal to qualify automatically, leaving him free to pick Faldo and Parnevik. If not, it could be Faldo and Ollie.

Should Faldo get the nod, Colin Montgomerie expects to partner him after Ballesteros paired them for a shoot-out at Wentworth which they won. Montgomerie beat Phil Mickelson in a made-for-television match in Colorado on Monday, then flew home on Concorde on Tuesday. But his luggage was lost flying to Dublin yesterday and he went to the pro shop and spent £120 on a shirt and trousers to play in the pro-am.

## Bullets and Giants look to States

Basketball

Manchester Giants and Birmingham Bullets hope they made their last transatlantic transactions of the summer yesterday, when they completed their rosters with new Americans for the Basketball League season beginning on 13 September, writes Richard Taylor.

The Giants' new coach, Jim Brandon, who left Sheffield Sharks earlier in the summer, has signed the 6ft 4in, 22-year-old guard Brett Larrick, one of the leading scorers in the top college division with Charleston Southern University. The Bullets' new coach, Mike Finger, has signed H. L. Coleman, one of the top 10 rebounders in college basketball last season.

## Baseball

AMERICAN LEAGUE: Toronto 6 Chicago White Sox 5 (first game); Chicago White Sox 5 Toronto 2 (second); Baltimore 12 Kansas City 9 (first game); Kansas City 9 Baltimore 2 (second); Detroit 6 Minnesota 2; Milwaukee 8 Texas 2; Anaheim 12 New York Yankees 4; Cleveland 7 Seattle 5; Postponed: Boston v Oakland.

NATIONAL LEAGUE: Florida 6 Chicago Cubs 1; Cincinnati 6 Colorado 5; St Louis 12 Montreal 10; San Francisco 9 Philadelphia 3; Pittsburgh 6 San Diego 2; Los Angeles 4 New York Mets 2; Atlanta 4 Houston 3.

BASEBALL: Fourth round winners: S. Coates (Weston), B. Hughes (Cheltenham), S. Coates (Weston), R. Hughes (Cheltenham), S. Coates (Weston), R. Hughes (Cheltenham), S. Coates (Weston), R. Hughes (Cheltenham).

BASEBALL: Fourth round winners: S. Coates (Weston), B. Hughes (Cheltenham), S. Coates (Weston), R. Hughes (Cheltenham), S. Coates (Weston), R. Hughes (Cheltenham), S. Coates (Weston), R. Hughes (Cheltenham).

## Football

Oxford United, who were hoping to move into a new £20m stadium this summer, will have to wait at least until next August after an unnamed financial backer pulled out. Robert Herd, the chairman, told the club's AGM: "The stadium will be built. I just can't promise when."

Napoli, the Italian First Division club, are to seek a Stock Exchange listing in London in the near future. The club's administrator, Gianmario Innocenti, said: "There are fewer restrictions there than in our country." He added that after years in the red, the club was in the black last year.

BASEBALL: Fourth round winners: S. Coates (Weston), B. Hughes (Cheltenham), S. Coates (Weston), R. Hughes (Cheltenham), S. Coates (Weston), R. Hughes (Cheltenham), S. Coates (Weston), R. Hughes (Cheltenham).

BASEBALL: Fourth round winners: S. Coates (Weston), B. Hughes (Cheltenham), S. Coates (Weston), R. Hughes (Cheltenham), S. Coates (Weston), R. Hughes (Cheltenham), S. Coates (Weston), R. Hughes (Cheltenham).

proposal tabled by the amateur clubs suggesting a format by which their senior members could progress to the professional game. The talks were endorsed by a special meeting of clubs last Wednesday and will present the first proposal for competition in the game's history.

Rugby Union: Yorkshire (Rugby League), Amst. Quotidian School 8 English School 18 (Goal 54).

BASEBALL: Fourth round winners: S. Coates (Weston), B. Hughes (Cheltenham), S. Coates (Weston), R. Hughes (Cheltenham), S. Coates (Weston), R. Hughes (Cheltenham), S. Coates (Weston), R. Hughes (Cheltenham).

BASEBALL: Fourth round winners: S. Coates (Weston), B. Hughes (Cheltenham), S. Coates (Weston), R. Hughes (Cheltenham), S. Coates (Weston), R. Hughes (Cheltenham), S. Coates (Weston), R. Hughes (Cheltenham).

Swimming: European Championships (Glasgow, Scot): Men: 200m butterfly: Heat One: 1 M. Gurnea (Ire) 2:05.00; 2 M. Gurnea (Ire) 2:05.00; 3 M. Gurnea (Ire) 2:05.00; 4 M. Gurnea (Ire) 2:05.00; 5 M. Gurnea (Ire) 2:05.00; 6 M. Gurnea (Ire) 2:05.00; 7 M. Gurnea (Ire) 2:05.00; 8 M. Gurnea (Ire) 2:05.00; 9 M. Gurnea (Ire) 2:05.00; 10 M. Gurnea (Ire) 2:05.00; 11 M. Gurnea (Ire) 2:05.00; 12 M. Gurnea (Ire) 2:05.00; 13 M. Gurnea (Ire) 2:05.00; 14 M. Gurnea (Ire) 2:05.00; 15 M. Gurnea (Ire) 2:05.00; 16 M. Gurnea (Ire) 2:05.00; 17 M. Gurnea (Ire) 2:05.00; 18 M. Gurnea (Ire) 2:05.00; 19 M. Gurnea (Ire) 2:05.00; 20 M. Gurnea (Ire) 2:05.00; 21 M. Gurnea (Ire) 2:05.00; 22 M. Gurnea (Ire) 2:05.00; 23 M. Gurnea (Ire) 2:05.00; 24 M. Gurnea (Ire) 2:05.00; 25 M. Gurnea (Ire) 2:05.00; 26 M. Gurnea (Ire) 2:05.00; 27 M. Gurnea (Ire) 2:05.00; 28 M. Gurnea (Ire) 2:05.00; 29 M. Gurnea (Ire) 2:05.00; 30 M. Gurnea (Ire) 2:05.00; 31 M. Gurnea (Ire) 2:05.00; 32 M. Gurnea (Ire) 2:05.00; 33 M. 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**Boys from the blackstuff**  
Ken Jones on the contribution made  
by miners to sport, page 22

**sport**

**Homeward bound**  
Pete Sampras looks forward to the  
US Open, page 22

# Atherton aiming to end Ashes series on a high

**Cricket**  
DEREK PRINGLE

With both the series and the Ashes gone to Australia, it is inevitable that the final Cornhill Test match starting today at the Oval will be dominated by speculation over the uncertain futures of the two captains. Contrasting as their teams' fortunes have been, there remains a distinct possibility that after this Test neither will lead their country again.

Which just goes to prove that win or lose, cricket, for all its sepia-tinted nostalgia, does not discriminate between victor and vanquished.

This summer could not have

progressed more differently for Michael Atherton and Mark Taylor. The Australian captain and his team began in the doldrums; the leader, according to many at the start of the tour, had neither form nor a future. But while his team struggled and eventually lost at Edgbaston, Taylor plumed the depths of his inner resources and came up with the hundred that would buy him the time to get his side back to business. It did not take long and, once they remembered how to win, their efficiency was almost surgical in its precision.

Atherton, on the other hand, saw England begin their campaign dead perfect, as Australia were dispatched in both

the one-day series and the first Test. Suddenly, though, expectation caught up with them and the true pressures of Test cricket – the need for relentless consistency – were brought to bear. As in the past against sides that can exert constant pressure, they were found wanting and three Tests were lost in succession.

But if the paths to an uncertain future are divergent ones, Taylor has the most to lose by being stood down. Captain or not, Atherton is still England's most reliable and technically proficient batsman and, injury permitting, has at least another three years of Test cricket in him. On the other hand, Taylor, without the cap-

taincy and nearly 33, will almost certainly never play for Australia again.

However, if his own future is something Taylor can contemplate at leisure when he gets home from this tour, he could still empathise with Atherton. "I have a lot of feeling for Atherton," Taylor said after net practice yesterday. "Whether it's right or wrong, the captain carries the can. What I don't ascribe to is that by changing the captain, or changing the coach or the team, you are going to change the way things are going. Cricket just doesn't work like that."

These will be heartening words to Atherton, who will contemplate his own future af-

ter this Test is finished. With England's good record at the Oval – 13 wins to Australia's five – many will be hoping a repeat of England's victory there against the Aussies four years ago (coincidentally, Atherton's first win as captain) will help persuade him to remain in charge for this winter's tour to the West Indies.

"A win here will be the best way to finish the series," Atherton said yesterday, although he added that it would be difficult to say whether it would have any bearing on his eventual decision regarding the captaincy.

After the coach David Lloyd's frank criticism of his team's performances on Tues-

day, England nevertheless have a good chance of saving some face and recording their second victory of the series.

Still, it will not be easy. Taylor admitted that, with the rubber dead, there was not a "must-win situation". That said, his side, despite the absence of two frontline bowlers, were professional cricketers who play for Australia and would still be "turning up".

Being a Test match, the occasion will not lack for combativeness and both sides have new faces who have much to play for.

If Shaun Young, Gloucestershire's Tasmanian overseas player, and Mike Kasprout get their chance to make a be-

lated point to their tour selectors, England's returning players, Mark Ramprakash, Phil Tufnell and (should Dean Headley's bruised ankle still be painful) Peter Martin, all have four places to compete for.

For Ramprakash, a stellar if frustratingly under-achieving talent at Test level, the stakes could not be higher. After 19 Tests, he will know that few are granted the reprieve of resuming a Test career with a batting average of just 16.6.

As his captain said yesterday: "He has to play for the here and now as well as the years to follow."

With the positive endorsements of all those around him, Ramprakash must convince

himself he is the world-class player everyone else believes him to be. To do that here, he must not only conquer two of the world's best bowlers, Shane Warne and Glenn McGrath, but those forces that conspire to deny him from within. It is a task only a man desperate to do himself justice would relish. For some, the future starts here.

ENGLAND (from): M A Atherton (capt), M A Butcher, A J Stewart (wkt), N Hussain, G P Thompson, M R Ramprakash, A J Hales, A R Coad, P J Martin, P C R Fulton, T E McElwain, D W Howarth, A C Holloes. AUSTRALIA: M A Taylor (capt), M T G Elliott, G S Blewett, M E Waugh, S R Waugh, R T Posing, I A Healy (wkt), S Young, S K Warne, M S Kasprout, G O McGrath. Umpires: P Wiley, L Barker (West Indies). Third umpire: K E Palmer. Match referees: C W Smith (West Indies).

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## Rowell leaves red faces at Twickenham

CHRIS HEWITT  
Rugby Union Correspondent

Jack Rowell, the most successful club coach in the history of the English game and no mean performer at Test level, yesterday called time on his three and a half year career at the helm of the national team and left those Rugby Football Union officials responsible for a shabby and squalid high summer denouement to face the consequences of their actions. The chastened inhabitants of Twickenham's corridors of power must now conjure a replacement from this air, having failed to find one in the shadowy spaces behind Rowell's back.

Rowell informed leading figures on the national playing committee yesterday afternoon of his decision to relinquish his position with effect from Sunday week, when his current part-time contract expires.

Almost exactly 48 hours previously Ian McGeechan, the former Scotland coach who guided the Lions to victory in South Africa in June, had rejected an official offer to fill Rowell's shoes, leaving his Twickenham temper almost knock-kneed with embarrassment.

Having failed to lure their preferred choice and lost their incumbent as a direct result of their hole-in-the-corner tactics – it would be stretching credulity to suggest that the approach to McGeechan did not hasten Rowell's departure, whatever diplomatic face the Twickenham spin-doctors attempt to apply to

the situation – the RFU find themselves in the prickliest of positions. England are scheduled to play 13 internationals over the next 10 months, starting with gentle autumn run-outs against New Zealand, South Africa and Australia, and unless Bob Dwyer, the former Wallaby World Cup-winning coach can be persuaded out of the remaining year of his contract at Leicester, they will be forced to place their faith in an untried, untested rookie.

Dwyer was sounded out during last season's Five Nations Championship – a tournament Rowell came within 20 slovenly minutes against the French of winning in Grand Slam style – but there was no follow-up. Instead, the RFU went after McGeechan and Graham Henry, the hot-streak tactician behind the Super 12 champions, Auckland. Rowell was fully aware of both initiatives and opted to keep his counsel, but private conversations with colleagues and acquaintances on Monday left them in no doubt as to the depth of his anger and frustration.

Phil de Glanville, the Bath centre appointed by Rowell as England captain nine months ago, was saddened but not remotely surprised by yesterday's news. "He's been thinking this over for some time," he said. "He's a shrewd man." Like Rowell, De Glanville diplomatically kept the lid on his feelings but along with most of the England squad, he quietly articulated his disgust at his mentors' treatment on more than one occasion during the summer.

The RFU will almost certainly attempt to explain Rowell's departure by citing his unwillingness to compromise a spectacularly lucrative management consultancy career by taking on a full-time role with England and, indeed, Rowell may seek the quiet life by following that particular line himself, at least in public. But as one England insider pointed out on Monday before McGeechan's decision had been announced: "There is nothing to stop Jack combining the two halves of his life. That is not the issue. The issue lies at Twickenham with the people who have undermined him. They know who they are."

If Fran Cotton, Bill Beaumont and the rest of the new RFU hierarchy decide against reopening negotiations with Dwyer or, indeed, Henry or McGeechan, they may opt to appoint a senior and well-respected rugby figure as manager and pair him with a young, enthusiastic coach. Roger Uttley, a member of Beaumont's 1980 Grand Slam-winning side and as a key figure in the coaching team that led England to the World Cup Final six years ago, would be an obvious candidate for the management role.

Among the coaching contenders, Clive Woodward of Bath would bring the most visionary qualities to a job crying out for an ideas man while Richard Hill, who played under Rowell at Bath before starting a successful coaching stint at Gloucester, is highly thought of in RFU circles for his deep commitment and strong work ethic.



The unstoppable Michelle de Bruin celebrates victory in the 200m freestyle in Seville yesterday. Photograph: Reuters

## De Bruin's sour success

**Swimming**  
JAMES PARRACK  
reports from Seville

Just as the European Championships burst into life on the second day of competition in Seville yesterday, Ireland's Michelle de Bruin, formerly Michelle Smith, threatened to suffocate them.

Britain won their second gold in the men's 4x200m freestyle relay and set two British records but the controversy surrounding De Bruin continues to dominate the championships. Yesterday she won her second title in the women's 200m freestyle and appears unstoppable in her march towards an unprecedented five gold medals.

Such is the speculation of drug use that national records of other participating countries have been overshadowed. De Bruin, who has always denied using drugs and has never failed a drugs test, has been the centre of controversy ever since winning three Olympic gold medals in Atlanta. It has also

been suggested that she is a puppet to her husband, Erik.

The saga began here on Sunday when Erik was called to explain to LEN, the European governing body, why he fraudulently gained access to doping control in Vienna two years ago. On Monday, Michelle was not allowed to enter an event (her entry was after the deadline) and withdrew from another. On the same day, all her entry times were thrown out because they were done more than 12 months ago, so she has to swim in the slowest heat of each of her events.

Then Erik, himself banned from international athletics for a positive drug test in 1993, issued a lengthy solicitor's letter to a Canadian journalist demanding an explanation and apology for remarks made on radio in Ireland in July.

Then after her first gold medal on the opening day of competition, she failed to turn up for an official press conference which is required of all medalists in Seville. Hers, however, was a spontaneous crowded gathering outside doping control.

When Erik had decided enough was enough, he picked up her bags and pulled her away. Her mandatory meeting with the press after her victory yesterday was banal. No, she was not surprised by the result, and yes, she was delighted by the win. It was swiftly wound up by her husband.

The reason for the controversy is that her spectacular progress since meeting Erik de Bruin in 1993 has been beyond the belief of some observers. In the 400m individual medley, for example, she improved 5.32sec between 1988 and 1992 to a modest 4:47.89; after meeting Erik, in 1993 she improved by 17.27sec in less than two years to become Olympic champion. In a 26-year-old who has competed in two previous Olympics it is unheard of.

Added to this she refused to comply with out-of-competition drug-testing protocols, failing to provide details of her whereabouts and was unavailable for testing in October 1995 and again in 1996. After a written warning to the Irish ASA in January this year, speculation grew that she would be banned when

it happened again in February. No doubt Michelle de Bruin's clouds will have a golden lining this week, and there is a golden glow breaking over the British squad, too. The men's 4x200m freestyle relay team were jubilant after Paul Palmer added the team gold to the one he won on Tuesday. Before the race, Jamie Salter, who missed an individual bronze by one-hundredth of a second, said he would be giving everything to win a gold. His phenomenal final leg of 1:48.45 overhauled a deficit of almost a second to take Britain's first medal in this event since 1938.

Also in record-breaking form was Jamie King, Palmer's teammate from Bath, recording a time of 2:29.91 from the heats in the 200m breaststroke. The man of the day today will be the Russian, Alex Popov. The first man to retain the Olympic 100m freestyle title since Johnny Weismuller, Popov is returning to international competition after nearly losing his life when stabbed in a Moscow street market last August nearly took his life.

Cricket at boiling point, photograph, page 22

## Umpire acts over McCague beamer

The Kent pace bowler, Martin McCague, was removed from the attack by order of the umpire Alan Whitehead in a turbulent start to yesterday's County Championship match at Taunton.

Whitehead stepped in during McCague's third over which began with two bouncers and a chest-high beamer to the Somerset opener, Roh Turner. The umpire called the second and third deliveries no-balls before summoning the Kent captain, Steve Marsh. McCague retired to the outfield with figures of 2.1-0-22-0, including four no-balls, and Mark Ealham completed the over.

Whitehead insisted that he had no option but to order McCague out of the Kent attack for unfair bowling. "I had no choice in the matter," Whitehead said, "even though it was accidental and McCague apologised. He had already received a final warning before a chest-high full toss, and I have to do the job."

A shaken McCague would only say: "I'm still getting over it. I hope people saw it as accidental because that was certainly the case."

The Kent coach, John Wright, was also saying little. "The umpire is in control of the game and that's all I am prepared to say," he said.

If it was McCague's intention to intimidate the batsman, it failed. Turner justified his promotion to opener with an innings of 144 as Somerset closed on 366 for 6.

Turner, who went into the match with a first class average of 56, confirmed his growing reputation with a mature innings. The 29-year-old wicket keeper reached his century off 188 balls, with 14 fours, and maintained concentration superbly for six hours nine minutes, adding six more boundaries before losing his wicket to a tired bowler.

Simon Eccleston, captaining Somerset in the absence of Peter Bowler (back injury) and Richard Harden (virus), won the toss and took first use of a dry pitch. After 14 had come from McCague's first over, including no-balls, Ben Phillips removed Piran Holloway first ball as he edged to Trevor Ward at second slip. Marcus Trescothick was caught behind without scoring off Matthew Fleming to leave Somerset 76 for 3.

Eccleston then joined Turner, only to suffer a knee injury which caused him to retire on three. He later returned to reach his maiden championship century off 170 balls with 16 fours and a six, and was 103 not out at the close after sharing a sixth-wicket stand of 171 with the resilient Turner.

Kent, who started the game in second place, also saw their Championship chances dented by two badly dropped catches, which gave lives to Eccleston on 22 and Turner on 110. The unfortunate McCague and Alan Wells were the culprits at point and slip respectively.

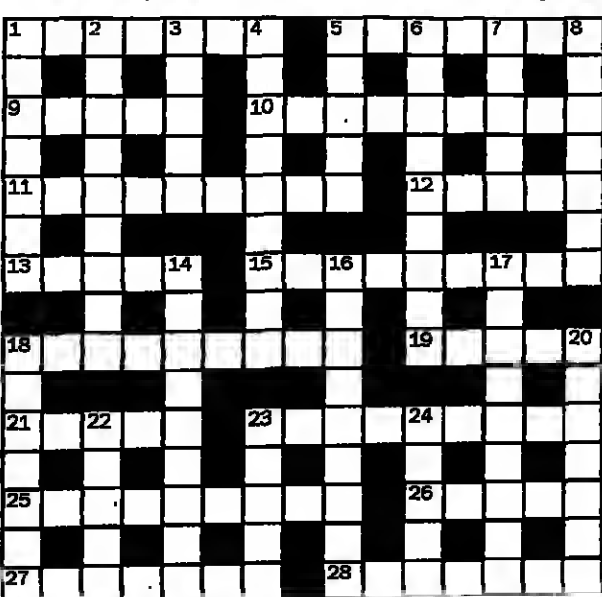
Cricket at boiling point, photograph, page 22

## THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3383 Thursday 21 August

By Mass

Wednesday's solution



REVOLUTIONARY ARMY  
COURAGEOUS  
SLANG  
NIGHTCLUB  
MAJORITY  
SETH ARCHETYPAL

- ACROSS**
- Carp about piano in work unduly devoted to fashion (7)
  - Beats paths out of East (5)
  - Set up academic function and procedure (9)
  - The symbols required by a dictator? (9)
  - Plant from mountains round Uruguay (5)
  - Sprinkle plants seedling to be coaxed back (5)
  - Spider worker's joining Union, note, after rejection of scab (9)
  - Tuning up prior to medley (9)
  - Inundate Exchange; investing millions (5)
  - Audibly criticise entertainment (5)
  - After a time, politician's one who'll join the papers? (9)
  - A French shanty on the French release (9)
  - French and King fil, making a house? (5)
  - Ray's the one likely to get fired (7)
  - Family title reinforced by grand political status (7)
  - Sources of timber for endless trestles (7)
  - One used to carrying a load? (9)
  - Addition to dress produced by pins, etc (5)
  - Lady's fate, interwoven with HM's future (9)
  - Cook fish that's strong (5)
  - Birds with shiny features pecking plant (9)

- DOWN**
- Hawk's snaffled river fish (5)
  - Foreign article appended to old literature (7)
  - Extensive drink pickles (they say) up top (9)
  - Tickle bolder pockets small amount, fifth among prizes (4,5)
  - Uniform and shirt removed from laundrette, crumpled (9)
  - Hunt for work (7)
  - Shield against one's eye, mainly (5)
  - Floor reportedly has old look (5)
  - Black storm over North (5)

## Lee and Clark insist Kinkladze will stay at City

**Football**  
RUPERT METCALF

Francis Lee, the Manchester City chairman, is trying to dampen speculation about the departure of Giorgi Kinkladze by insisting that the Georgian international is staying at Maine Road.

"Our highest price this season is going to be getting into the Premiership and to do that without a star player of Kink-

ladze's quality would make it difficult," Lee said. "I have played with and alongside the best players in the world and Kinkladze is in that category."

Frank Clark, the City manager, backed Lee by saying: "We've had no inquiries from anybody... We are not looking to sell Kinkladze."

The Tottenham striker, Stefan Iversen, looks set to escape disciplinary action over a gesture he made towards a referee last week.

The Norwegian was captured on camera aiming a derisive hand signal at the back of Steve Lodge after he was booked for his part in a brawl that interrupted Spurs' 2-1 defeat at West Ham. However, Lodge has viewed film of the incident and has decided against asking the Football Association to take action against Iversen.

The Frenchman has reportedly claimed he is owed a £750,000 share from the sale of souvenir items bearing his name.

However, United claim he was paid off in full when he left the club at the end of last season. Maurice Watkins, a United director, said: "The club does not consider itself to have any liabilities to Eric at all."

Brighton and Hove Albion are still pushing their plan to play the rest of this season's home games at Millwall in-

stead of Gillingham. Yesterday the League was meeting the two clubs, police and council officials to discuss the consequences of Brighton playing at the New Den for up to three years.

"We have received initial encouragement from the League in terms of making a formal application for the Millwall ground share," Dick Knight, Brighton's chairman-elect, said. "The League are fully aware that it is the overwhelming choice of all Brighton fans."